

القرآن الكريم
وَمَا لِلدِّينِ هِيَ الْعَالَمِينَ

THE
ASCENDANT QUR'AN
Realigning Man to the Divine Power Culture

VOLUME 11
Al-Mā'idah:82-120
to al-An'ām:1-32



Muhammad H. al-Āṣī



In the Name of Allah,
the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful

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Al-Mā'idah:82–120 to al-An'ām:1–32

Muḥammad H. al-Āṣī

THE INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC THOUGHT

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Allah (ﷻ) says in His noble Book,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٥٦﴾

“Verily, Allah and His Angels send salutations on the Apostle.
O You who are firmly committed [to Allah], you too [must]
send the most worthy salutations and blessings upon him.”
(Sūrah al-Aḥzāb:56)

In launching this *tafsīr*, we beseech Allah (ﷻ) to bless His final Messenger, Muhammad (ﷺ), all the Prophets (ﷺ) who preceded him, and all those who, despite great difficulty and sacrifice, sincerely follow in their footsteps from the *ṣāliḥīn*, the *ṣiddīqīn*, the *shuhadā'*, and the *marḥūmūn*. We also beseech Allah (ﷻ) to bless and amply reward those who have helped in the publication of this *tafsīr* in whatever capacity.

— The Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought

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Publisher's Foreword

In this volume of the *tafsīr*, *The Ascendant Qur'an: Realigning Man to the Divine Power Culture*, by Imam Muḥammad Ḥ al-Āṣī, the last portion of *Sūrah al-Mā'idah* (āyāt 82–120) and the first 32 āyāt of *Sūrah al-An'ām* are covered. *Sūrah al-Mā'idah* was revealed in Madinah. As for *Sūrah al-An'ām*, a Makkan *sūrah*, there is general consensus among scholars that it was revealed in the last year of the Prophet's (ﷺ) mission in Makkah before he was forced to seek sanctuary in Madinah.

As our Creator and Sustainer, Allah (ﷻ) is fully aware of our capabilities as well as weaknesses. That is why He provides us guidance so that we may distinguish right from wrong and make the right choices to earn His pleasure and avoid His corrective justice. But given the human tendency to fall into error despite divine revelation and guidance, Allah (ﷻ) provides constant reminders as is evident from the last āyāt of *Sūrah al-Mā'idah*.

One of the more consequential themes running through virtually all the *sūrahs* of the noble Qur'an relates to Allah's (ﷻ) authority. Humans are prone to not only forget, but also become arrogant, often as a result of some minor achievement in life. This

can easily lead people to think they are self-sufficient unto themselves. As with individuals, so with societies — hence the rampant racism, tribalism, discrimination, and classism so widespread in the world today, borne out of a sense of self-importance and air of superiority. Such tendencies do not arise — or are kept in check — when people subsume their potential hubris to their compliance with Allah (ﷻ), recognizing and opting for His authority as the sole decision-maker and Creator. When we defer all matters to Allah (ﷻ), we rest assured that the many who suffer from poverty and injustice at the hands of the few who are born into privilege, power, and wealth will be relieved. In the formative phase of Islam, when such decisions were placed in the hands of committed Muslims, a *dīn* belonging to Allah (ﷻ) took center stage, with all matters being referred to His Book of justice and His Prophet (ﷺ) of mercy. These early Muslims, who were just emerging out of the pre-Islamic *jāhiliyyah* (ignocracy), became the most upright human beings on earth, indeed pacesetters for all humanity.

At the end of *Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, Allah (ﷻ) again reiterates the urgency to establish an *ummah*. Not a call to exclusivity — Islam is inclusive — it simply reflects the fact that only a body of people committed to the standard of Allah's authority, which inevitably engenders a society founded upon undiluted doctrine and patterned on the prophetic archetype, can establish the *dīn* of Allah (ﷻ) on earth. This Ummah is not dependent on, conditioned by, or relative to any other ideology or philosophy because divinity and authority belong exclusively to Allah (ﷻ). Therefore, man's developmental programs, legal procedures, value system, and political orientations, by necessity, would be a derivative of this central fact and core belief.

At the beginning of *al-Mā'idah*, Allah (ﷻ) clarifies for us what is *ḥalāl* (permissible, and thereby good for man) and what is *ḥarām* (prohibited, and thereby detractive from man's mission on earth). This theme is revisited at end of the *sūrah* together with a reminder that whatever Allah (ﷻ) has made lawful cannot be made unlawful and whatever He has prohibited, no human being can make lawful. This was an admonition directed at the Yahūd be-

cause they had a tendency to make their own rules about *halāl* and *ḥarām* in contravention to what Allah (ﷻ) had ordained.

The last few *āyāt* also outline regulations for transactions, prohibition on intoxicants (*khamr*), gambling, betting, and other such practices, as well as prohibition on hunting while in *iḥrām* (state of ritual consecration, made evident in the case of Muslim men by the two pieces of white, unstitched cloth worn at the time of 'Umrah or Hajj). The issues of the sanctity of the Ka'bah and the sacrosanct months in the Islamic calendar are also dealt with in this *sūrah* as they are in the *sūrah*s preceding it.

The final *āyāt* of the *sūrah* correct the distortions prevalent among Christians about Jesus and Mary (ﷺ). While the Qur'an narrates the miracles performed by Jesus, it also emphasizes repeatedly that these miracles occurred only with Allah's (ﷻ) leave and permission. The issue of the so-called divinity of Jesus and his mother (ﷺ) is also discussed, with Jesus himself countering such a claim when all humanity is relocated in time to the Day of Judgment (Accountability). There, he denies all this "Christian theology" about his "divinity," and everyone on that day and at that time will be witness to this exoneration. And as it should be with all issues theological, Jesus (ﷺ) turns over the whole affair to his Lord and Sustainer and the Sustainer of all humanity — Allah (ﷻ).

While the Qur'an talks about the animosity of the Yahūd and Naṣārā, this refers to political Jews (Zionists) and political Christians (imperialists), not to scriptural Jews or scriptural Christians. This distinction is important because the Zionists and imperialists have deliberately obfuscated these lines and some Muslims either out of ignorance or an inferiority complex have swallowed this propaganda. The result is that despite the horrors the Zionists and imperialists have inflicted upon millions of innocent Muslims, the latter are unable to confront this reality head-on.

Yahūdī animosity — much more intense than that of the Christians — predates Islam. The Qur'an tells us that long before the establishment of the Islamic State in Madinah, Yahūdī anger and intransigence had already led to their murdering the messengers of Allah (ﷻ). With the advent of the Muhammadi era of scripture

in Arabia, the mischief-making Yahūd did not all of a sudden part with their belligerent predilection; rather, they renewed their antipathy to Allah's (ﷻ) *dīn* and aversion to its main representative, even making common cause with the *mushriks*.

What is puzzling — and troubling — is that while these Qur'anic instructions live on, their upholders — the Muslims — have virtually faded away from carrying these responsibilities. Part-time Muslims engrossed in rituals need to come back to the confidence-building meanings of the noble Qur'an so that they will know how to move forward in life without being confused about "who is a friend" and "who is an enemy." This impeccable Qur'an enables them to do so.

The next *sūrah*, *al-An'ām*, was revealed in Makkah. This is the first of the long Makkan *sūrah*s that we encounter in the Qur'an. It may be appropriate at this point to briefly review the 13 years of prophetic life in Makkah, which can be divided into four distinct phases:

1. In the first three years after revelation, Islam's message was communicated secretly to a small circle of people;
2. From the third through fifth years, the message was openly proclaimed but it led to the ridicule and persecution of the first Muslims of the Muhammadi mission. It was also during this period that Sumayyah bint Khayyāṭ and her husband Yāsir ibn 'Āmir were tortured to death because they had become Muslims;
3. The period from the fifth through the tenth year was characterized by extreme persecution and torture, forcing a large number of Muslim men and women to seek asylum in Abyssinia. Those who remained in Makkah faced not only persecution but also a three-year siege in Sha'b Abī Ṭālib (years 7–10). All members of the Banū Hāshim clan to which the Prophet (ﷺ) belonged, as well as his companions, were boycotted. The siege was so severe that the Muslims were even denied food forcing them to eat leaves and grass for survival; and
4. Years 10–13 were the most difficult in the life of the noble Messenger (ﷺ). At the end of the siege, he lost two of his clos-

est companions and supporters — his wife for 25 years, Khadijah, and his uncle Abū Ṭālib, who had been able to protect his nephew from the vicious attacks of the Makkan chiefs due to the security guarantees that were still honored by the power factions of Makkah. With Khadijah's passing, the Prophet (ﷺ) lost the one person who had provided him comfort and solace at home, and with Abū Ṭālib's, he became vulnerable to physical attacks and threats of murder. It was at the end of this grim period that there was an explosion of divine mercy. An opening emerged in Madinah where some of the people of the two dominant power factions there, the Aws and Khazraj, were more amenable to the message of Islam. This stood in sharp contrast to the attitude of the haughty and arrogant *mushrik* chiefs of Makkah.

Thus, if we keep the four phases in mind when studying the Makkan *sūrah*s, we will get a better understanding of the contents of each *sūrah*. Context is important for understanding the Qur'an. Before considering the major and minor aspects of *Sūrah al-An'am*, let us understand some of the defining features common to all the longer Makkan *sūrah*s:

1. emphasis on *tauhīd* (the oneness of Allah) with particular attention to His power and authority;
2. Muhammad's (ﷺ) position as the Messenger of Allah who would deliver the divine message to all humanity;
3. the Day of Reckoning at the end of man's earthly existence when he will be held accountable for his deeds;
4. narration of the life struggle of earlier prophets and how their people incurred Allah's (ﷻ) condemnation for the *ẓulm* that consumed them as a consequence of their refusal to accept the divine message;
5. divine response to the ludicrous demands, objections, and protestations of the Makkan *mushriks*; and
6. Allah (ﷻ) choosing a human to deliver His message to the people, as opposed to an angel. All the earlier prophets were human. That messengers were not angels, but human, and dis-

tinguished only by revelation from on high, is emphasized in this *sūrah*,

Say [O Prophet], “I do not say unto you, ‘Allah’s treasures are with me’; nor [do I say], ‘I know the things that are beyond the reach of human perception’; nor do I say to you, ‘Behold, I am an angel’; I but follow what is revealed to me [from on high]” (6:50).

In another *sūrah*, this point is reiterated, “Say though, [O Prophet], ‘I am but a mortal like you. It has been revealed to me that your god is [the] One God: go, then, straight toward Him and seek His forgiveness!’” (41:06).

Al-An‘ām and the *sūrah* immediately following it in the noble Qur’an — *al-A‘rāf* — are the two longest *sūrah*s revealed in Makkah. Thus, while they emphasize the three principal themes — Allah’s Oneness, power, and authority; prophethood; and the Day of Judgement — they also contain other themes relating to life in this *dunyā* as well as the hereafter. The rejection of false deities is constantly emphasized, as is the propagation of the oneness of Allah (ﷻ). Values, customs, and systems based on erroneous beliefs are rejected while Islamic principles are outlined in general terms in preparation for the more specific injunctions to follow in the Madinan *sūrah*s. The deconstruction of *jāhili* practices was necessary to prepare the society for the implementation of divinely ordained principles.

With the multiplicity of gods the *mushriks* sought guidance and comfort from — gods they had crafted with their own hands out of stone or wood — they also believed that one of these gods was Allah (ﷻ). This reflected their warped thinking. Into this prevailing environment, the proclamation of *lā ilāha illā Allāh* came as a political statement, an ideological manifesto, and a doctrinal gauntlet. It was a rallying cry for political opposition to the status quo. It was a revolution against economic vested interests and political elites who

had stealthily reserved the “authority” part of divinity for themselves while remanding God to His spiritual matters that could not, for all practical purposes, effectively impact their established ways, historical precedents, or control of people’s lives and institutions. It was true then, during the formative phase of Islam, and it is true today — in fact much worse since the power elites, business leaders, top executives, and moneylenders have usurped the power and authority of Allah (ﷻ) and become far more entrenched.

The Islamic ideological article of commitment to Allah (ﷻ) — the *shahādah*, expressed as *ashhadu an lā ilāha illā Allāh, wa-ashhadu anna Muḥammadan rasūlu Allāh* — is an opposition statement and movement against all the power elites who have extracted and abducted authority from God and given it to themselves. It is a cry against the tyranny of power, the exploitation with money, and the temporal authorities and governments of man when he is on a collision course with God. Muslims are the ones who need to understand that their verbalization of *la ilāha illā Allāh* means they are rebels against man-made and man-centered governments — governments that have institutionalized an un-authoritative God through religions that answer to kings and presidents, monarchies and democracies, and are not to be bothered by the authority of Allah (ﷻ). This absent understanding is what the masses of Muslims and the masses of the oppressed people around the world need to revisit. And when this lost meaning is regained, it will empower a revolutionary movement of people who will, by Allah’s (ﷻ) will, topple dictatorships, collapse monarchies, and destroy illegitimate regimes.

It is precisely because of this “lost meaning” that the ruling classes of Arabia in those formative days went to war, in every sense of the word, against the Islamic ideological and political opposition to a world void of the kind of impartial justice that can only come from Allah (ﷻ). And it is also because of this reason that the Zionists and imperialists are at war with committed Muslims today. It is only by engaging the noble Qur’an and its penetrating words that Muslims can break out of their stupor and break free of their oppression to assume their responsibility in this world. This *tafsīr* by Imam al-Āṣī is meant to provide this valuable service.

As with earlier volumes, this volume too is edited by Br. Afeef Khan. Copious endnotes and references have also been provided to assist those who want to delve deeper into the subject matter to pursue their research activities. Thanks are also due to Br. Imran Khan and Br. Redzuan Shaw in providing timely and expeditious proofreading of the many pages in this volume. As with all the earlier volumes, an electronic version of this volume is also available for reading, or download, from the ICIT digital library (www.icit-digital.org). A hard copy is available through ICIT directly or through various on-line book retailers.

Thanks and gratitude are due to all those who have helped in whatever way to bring this volume — and the earlier ones — to fruition. Without their help, support, and encouragement, it would have been extremely difficult if not well nigh impossible to reach this far. Their reward is with Allah (ﷻ). May He, the Most Merciful Lord and Sustainer, multiply their contributions many times over. *Āmīn*.

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List of Honorifics

Honorifics are the words expressed by every Muslim when the name of Allah (ﷻ), the name of the Prophet (ﷺ), and the names of Allah's previous Prophets (ﷺ) are mentioned, spoken, or written. These are placed in parentheses after the name of each of the above is expressed. They are known to nearly every Muslim; however as this is an English-language *tafsīr* meant for a largely English-speaking audience that may have little experience with this kind of Islamic etiquette, the list below identifies the ones used throughout this volume, along with their meanings and specific usages.



subhānahu wa-ta'ālā (Exalted and August is He): used for Allah alone.



ṣallā allāhu 'alayhi wa-ālihi wa-sallam (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him and his family): used for Muhammad in any and all of his designations, such as *Messenger of Allah*, *the Prophet*, *the Messenger*, *Rasūl-Allah*, etc.



'*alayhi al-salām* (peace be upon him): used for every other prophet; masculine singular.



'*alayhim al-salām* (peace be upon them): used for all other prophets; inclusive plural, masculine and feminine.



'*alayhā al-salām* (peace be upon her): used for Eve, the wife of Adam, and for Mary, the mother of Jesus, among others; feminine singular.



'*alayhimā al-salām* (peace be upon them both): used for any combination of two prophets, for Adam and Eve, or for Mary and Jesus together; inclusive dual, masculine and feminine.

Transliteration Chart

Consonants

أ	none (initial)	ض	ḍ
ؤ ئ ء	' (medial or final)	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	‘
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	ة	ḥ
ش	sh	و	w
ص	ṣ	ي	y

Vowels and Diphthongs

□	a	ا□	ā	□ى	á
□ُ	u	آ□	ā	□ئى	ay
□ِ	i	□و	ū	□ؤ	aw
		□ى	ī		

The small box in the table above represents an Arabic consonant; for instance, if the box were replaced with the letter *f* (ف), then the table would assume the following configuration,

ف□	fa	فَا□	fā	فَعِ□	fá
فُ□	fu	فَا□	fā	فَعِي□	fay
فِ□	fi	فُو□	fū	فَعَوْ□	faw
		فِي□	fī		

Tanwīn and Tashdīd

□ان	an	□اي	ayy	□او	aww
□ان	an	□او	ūw	□ف	ff
□ان	un	□اي	īy (medial)	□ش	shsh
□ان	in	□اي	ī (final)	□ر	rr

Similarly, if the box were replaced with the letter *f* (ف), then the table above would look like the following,

فَان	fan	فَاي	fayy	فَاو	faww
فَان	fan	فَاو	fūw	فَف	ff
فَان	fun	فَاي	fīy (medial)	فَش	shsh
فَان	fin	فَاي	fī (final)	فَر	rr

5

Sūrah al-Mā'idah, Part 3

The Tablespread

Herein commences the last third of *Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, which also corresponds with the beginning of the seventh *juz'* of the Qur'an's thirty. The seventh *juz'* consists of the remainder of *Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, *āyāt* 5:82–120, and the portion of *Sūrah al-An'ām* that goes up to Allah's (ﷻ) words, **“And even if We were to have the angels ascend unto them” (6:111).**

The Qur'an was introduced to the Prophet's (ﷺ) heart and then humanized through his struggle for the purpose of fostering and organizing an *ummaḥ*. As this Ummah became a political unit, part of its completeness in this regard was reflected by the necessary emergence of a competent governing authority. And so, there was a society distinguished by its relationship with Allah (ﷻ) — a society with an elevated conscience, refined morals, and keen sense of direction and purpose. Inter-social relations were strong and friendly. Cross-cultural communication was effusive and effective.

The Ummah was politically independent but culturally conditional. Socially divisive issues — tribalism, discrimination, and classism — were out; politically divisive issues — Arabian nationalism, racism, and sexism — were still latent and bubbling under the surface. Referring all matters to the authority of Allah (ﷻ) turned up many enemies of force and fortune, even as raising His social standards lifted up many from poverty and injustice. And as such decisions were placed in the hands of committed Muslims, a *dīn* belonging to Allah took center stage — unlike today when we “Muslims” have a *dīn* that belongs to anyone and anything except Allah (ﷻ).

In a continuation of the all-important thematic element of the Qur’an, which is the basic substance of the previous *sūrah*s as well as of the end of *Sūrah al-Mā’idah*, Allah (ﷻ) reiterates the urgency to establish an *ummaḥ*, to struggle to organize an independent Islamic authority, and to regulate a society on the basis of an undiluted doctrine — an ideology and philosophy not dependent on, conditioned by, or relative to any other ideology or philosophy. The central theme of this “new” *dīn* would be Allah’s (ﷻ) sole divinity, His undivided authority, His exclusive dominance, and His single ascendancy. Therefore, man’s developmental programs, legal procedures, value system, and political orientations, by necessity, would be a derivative of this central fact and core belief.

Despite the fact that this Islamic genesis in Arabia was initially encumbered by idolatrous beliefs and “Yahūdī” and “Naṣrānī” assumptions, the early Muslims, after placing their social confidence in Allah (ﷻ), had to live up to the fact that they were now autonomous and self-directed. This Qur’an, as we have seen and as we will see, heightens the awareness of its adherents to the fact that there are detractors, disputants, and dissidents who will do whatever is within their reach to destroy this *dīn*. The Qur’an and the Prophet (ﷺ) are, in a sense, nourishment for our individual selves, for our social selves, and for our infinite selves. When we begin to starve in any one of these areas we should know where to find sustenance. And if we are unable to find it here, we will not find it at all. This *dīn* is a collection of purification observances impacting both the private and the public, it is a blueprint for regu-

lating transnational relations, it is also a legal code having its own *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* (legalities and illegalities) — all of these are wrapped up and packaged together as a compendium that cannot be disassembled or dismantled, as doing so is tantamount to running away from Allah (ﷻ) and His *dīn*.

As the *āyāt* of the Qur'an are current for all times and places, this *sūrah*, like its predecessors, highlights the reality that the class of people who were opposed to the Prophet and Islam then are still around today — objecting, opposing, denying, and rejecting Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ). It baffles the mind to see how this animosity lives on. One would think that after all this time there may have been a change of heart by those who use everything at their disposal to react against and contradict Islam. There may have been ups and downs in this animus toward Islam, but the line of historical continuity is still there. Within this historical bad blood there is a glimmer of hope represented by the massive turn to Islam by Christians and followers of other religions who saw the light and made their peace with their Creator. This accounts for Islam extending over a wider scope and expanse of space and time since its inception in Makkah and Madinah with the Prophet's (ﷺ) local struggle in geography to his followers' global struggle in ideology.

The ensuing *āyāt* of *Sūrah al-Mā'idah* contain yet another reminder of legal and “formal” procedures, the inference being that those who are responsible for this Qur'anic book of laws need extra advice and reinforcement. There are also more instructions about inebriants and libations (*khamr*), playing for stakes, gambling, and betting, as well as hunting while in the state of *iḥrām*. The issues of the sanctity of the Ka'bah and the sacrosanct months in the Islamic calendar are dealt with as well. In these and other matters, there is that constant reminder of Allah's (ﷻ) power presence, His singular authority, and His reward or punishment for those who deserve or incur one or the other. The perfect lessons are infused with the experience of Muslim actors whose imperfect psychology grows and “shows” through the real events of life. The challenges that emerge as devout Muslims move their program forward are real-time lessons that reveal who “people” really are.

In the early days of Islam in Arabia, the customs and traditions of *jāhiliyah* came tumbling down in society and in self. From incident to incident, from standoff to standoff, and from engagement to engagement, the committed Muslims became more self-conscious of who they were. They learned that in spite of their accommodating disposition, their desire to reach out, and their motivation to be inclusive, they still remained an *ummaḥ* unto itself with its sovereign status and its immaculate character.

The *sūrah* winds down with instructions on commercial transactions during journeys — all within the context of a growing Islamic society attending to its share of military responsibilities. The impression given is one of a highly mobile society that is advancing and expanding in all directions, but with one irrepressible constant: Allah (ﷻ) remaining in everyone’s heart, on everyone’s mind, and within everyone’s conscience. The final *āyāt* of the *sūrah* correct the historical information human beings have about Jesus and Mary (ﷺ), expound upon the miracles performed by Jesus, and give details about the tablespread requested by his disciples. On the recurring issue of the so-called divinity of Jesus and his mother (ﷺ), Jesus himself counters such a claim when all humanity is relocated in time to the Day of Accountability. There, he denies all this “Christian theology” about his “divinity,” and everyone on that day and at that time will be witness to this exoneration. And as it should be with all issues theological, Jesus (ﷺ) turns over the whole affair to his Sustainer and the Sustainer of humanity — Allah (ﷻ), the Creator and Sovereign of all.

Contrast between Devout Christians and Political Jews

To a brainwashed and deluded public, the next set of *āyāt* may seem politically incorrect or even rather harsh on the political elites of the People of the Book (Jews and Christians), in particular the Jews. However, looking at the words dispassionately, these same *āyāt* are soothing and comforting to the “religious” segment of Ahl al-Kitāb, especially the Christians. The tone of these *āyāt* is neither apologetic or appeasing, nor suggestive of some kind of inferiority or superiority complex. Rather, it is the truth of the matter, needing no embellishments. And this truth extends from those early years of Islam up to our very day.

- (5:82) You will surely find that, of all people, the most hostile to those who are committed [to Allah] are the Yahūd as well as those who are bent on ascribing authority to any beside Allah; and you will surely find that, of all people, they who say, “Behold, we are Christians,” come closest to feeling affection for those who are committed [to Allah]: this is so because there are priests and monks among them, and because these are not given to arrogance.
- (5:83) For, when they come to understand what has been bestowed from on high upon this Apostle, you can see their eyes overflow with tears, because they recognize something of its truth; [and] they say, “O our Sustainer! We do commit ourselves [to You]; make us one, then, with all who bear witness to the truth.
- (5:84) And how could we fail to dedicate ourselves to Allah and in whatever truth has come to us, when we so fervently desire that our Sustainer count us among the righteous?”
- (5:85) And for this, their belief, Allah will reward them with gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide: for such is the requital of the doers of good;
- (5:86) Whereas they who are bent on denying the truth and giving the lie to Our power presence (*āyāt*) — they are destined for the blazing fire (al-Mā'idah:82–86).

لَتَجِدَنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا^ط
 وَلَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُمْ مَوَدَّةً لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا
 نَصْرِيُّ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِيَسِينَ وَرَهْبَانًا وَآنَهُمْ لَا
 يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰ أَعْيُنُهُمْ
 تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا ءَامَنَّا فَاكْتَبْنَا
 مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَمَا لَنَا لَا نُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَنَطْمَعُ
 أَن يُدْخِلَنَا رَبَّنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾ فَاتَّبَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِمَا قَالُوا جَنَّتْ
 تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾
 وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٨٦﴾

This lesson delves into a topic that many Muslims prefer to ignore, especially those who subordinate themselves to Zionists and imperialists, along with their secular cohorts. With the human history of war, occupation, and invasion, one would think there is ample evidence of the true nature of Zionists and imperialists in the public space, but nonetheless, there are many influential individuals among Muslims who throw this history to the wind and read the words of the Qur'an as if they have no historical depth, no psychological insight, and no immediate implications. This Qur'an has spotlighted the fact that Zionists and imperialists (the political machinery of both Jews and Christians today) go back to the time of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in their odd and untenable positions

toward him and the Muslim Ummah, even though the labels attaching to them at the time may have been different; their behavior, however, has been consistent throughout the history of man.

Sūrah al-Mā'idah alone describes how the Jews have a faith that has disintegrated. The Christians also suffer from theological fallacies, as alluded to repeatedly in the first four *sūrah*s. Islamic history, in its Muhammadi installment, if the Muslims would only care to read and understand it, begins with acts of hatred and hostility toward an Islamic society that had its own autonomous Islamic state. This Yahūdī anger and aggravation pre-dates Islamic Madinah and Islamic Arabia; it goes back to their assaults on prophets and their unbalanced behavior with God's messengers ever since the time of Ya'qūb (ﷺ). And then in the Muhammadi era of scripture these Yahūd renewed their antipathy and aversion to God's *dīn* and its main representative, joining hands with the *mushriks* and working their connections and "lobbies" to abort the up-and-coming Islamic society and state. Peeling away the layers of their well-thought-out propaganda and manicured rituals reveals nothing more than a people bereft of faith fulfilment and scriptural social justice. It took a prophet like Muhammad (ﷺ) to bring to light the essence of Zionists and imperialists, who are the world's real *kāfirs*, even though they shroud themselves with their trumped-up relationship to Moses and Jesus; had they been true to Moses and Jesus they would also have been true to Muhammad (ﷺ). There is no Jewish rationale for Zionism or Christian argument for imperialism. Actually, principled Jews and Christians have the opportunity to prove their relationship with God by shredding Zionism and imperialism to pieces on the basis of scripture, revelation, and the holy writ that came to them from the Almighty.

Muhammad (ﷺ) was told to go public with every word in this sacred Qur'an. He was told to preach to the "Jews" and "Christians" in the same way he was to preach to the Arabians and pagans. There were no favorites, no chosen ones, and no special considerations for one over another; this was an equal opportunity message and everyone had the same chance to consider it and commit to it. The message was clear as it was inclusive: no one from the first

Qur'anic generation onward would have any legitimacy unless he belonged to Allah's (ﷻ) *dīn*. It was this *dīn* that was outlined in the Old and New Testaments before these holy books were altered by those who stood to financially and selfishly gain from such perversion. It turns out that the Jews and Christians failed in the responsibility to preserve the message by committing to it and implementing it, hence that responsibility was then passed on to the committed and struggling Muslims to succeed where the people of previous scripture did not. Committed Muslims have a relationship of confidence with Allah (ﷻ), His Prophet (ﷺ), and the members of their community, and hence with divine and prophetic authorization, they have the authority to act in a *taqwá-conscious* manner, which is entirely inconsistent with the exclusivist mindset that derailed both the Christians and the Jews.

In this dynamic, therefore, there is no room for Zionism or imperialism. Zionism and imperialism are creatures belonging to each other, and the Muslims do not and cannot fit into a model of camaraderie that excludes Allah's (ﷻ) guidance and replaces it with man's hubris. The fact, with its historical and incontrovertible roots, is that political Judaism has concocted policies rationalizing a "pact with the devil," inasmuch as they have allied themselves with *kāfirs*, *mushriks*, and the like, while expressing little to no contrition in the process — something no heartfelt Muslim can do. Because of this Yahūdī trait of trafficking with the *kāfirs*, they have been cursed and criminalized in the words of prophets who were sent to them specifically, among them David and Jesus, the son of Mary (ﷺ). The Qur'anic position is axiomatic and thus it is as applicable today as it was in ancient times. "Jews" and "Christians" have nowhere to hide when the Qur'an speaks about who they really are.

There once was a time when anxious Muslims were itching for the words of this Qur'an to come and show them the way, how to proceed, what to do, and who is who. When that was the case Muslims were not confused about the classes, communities, and cliques of people around them. The Qur'an gave them the penetrating ability to know what all of those people stood for. When such dramatic

Qur'anic words flowing between heaven and earth were proclaimed by “nomadic nothings,” these human bearers of the final divine scripture became the center of the world's attention. From here on these Qur'an-first Muslims were winning and not losing — because they were in the heartfelt presence of Allah (ﷻ) and in the practical company of His Prophet (ﷺ). And so, their enemies stood no chance.

What is puzzling is that these Qur'anic instructions live on while their upholders have virtually faded away. It is high time that Muslims-on-leave come back to these meanings so that they will know how to move forward in life without being confused about “who is a friend” and “who is an enemy.” The people in this world are of many stripes, shades, and colors. Some of them are edifying in speech and demeanor while others are, for all practical purposes, deadly. There are those who are consumed by religious creed and then there are the counterparts who use religion to further their narrow and personal interests. The number of beliefs, creeds, convictions, and religions, with all their derivative subcultures and schools of thought, is striking. This kaleidoscope of strong beliefs, religious doctrines, and faiths will continue to fluctuate until people place their hearts and their minds in the scope of this Qur'an and appreciate the struggle and sacrifices of the Prophet (ﷺ).

With all this in mind, the meanings of this lesson begin to come through, **“You will definitely find of all people the most antagonistic toward those who are committed [to Allah] to be the Yahūd and those who set up accessories [to Allah].”** The word *you* in this *āyah* may be in reference to the Prophet (ﷺ) or it may refer to the generic *you*, meaning anyone who is addressed or who listens to this Qur'an. Therefore, insofar as the latter case, the factual content of the *āyah* is accessible to any keen and observant human being, or more precisely, to anyone interested in knowing about this issue. What is eye-opening in this *āyah* is that when Allah (ﷻ) speaks about those who are hostile to committed Muslims, He places the Yahūd at the head of the line — even ahead of those who have set up their rivals and equivalents to the authority and divinity of the One God. One need not have a PhD to understand the

existence of a deep-seated and historically rooted Yahūdī animus toward human beings who are the vessels of Allah’s (ﷻ) will.

“You will most certainly find, of all people, the most intense in their hostility toward the committed Muslims to be the Yahūd and the secular [demoters of Allah’s authority].” The word *‘adāwah* (hostility/animus) is a form of hatred that is inclusive of both verbal and practical forms of expression. **“And you will certainly find that, of all people, they who say, ‘Behold, we are Christians,’ come closest to feeling affection for those who are committed [to Allah].”** The word *mawaddah* (affection/warmheartedness) is a form of strong positive regard and esteem that is similarly inclusive of its verbal and practical forms of expression. Note that in the careful Qur’anic diction, the word *mawaddah* is not the same as the word *maḥabbah* (love).

In order to try and rehabilitate today’s broken Muslim psychology, some of the words of this *āyah* need to be understood more precisely. The Arabic word *latajidanna* has two lexical emphasizees associated with it: the *lām* (the letter *l*) at the beginning and the *nūn al-tawkīd* (double *n*) at its end. This leaves no doubt about the vehement, fanatical, and visceral hostility of the Yahūd and secular *mushriks* against committed Muslims. Scanning the literature of Muslim scholars, the words in the *āyah* **“of all people...”** suggest that, in a particular sense, they are the Yahūd of the Ḥijāz and the *mushriks* of Arabia, along with the Christians of al-Ḥabashaḥ (Abyssinia).⁵⁶⁴ More generally, however, the Qur’anic expression could be referring to all the people in the world.

Taking the first interpretation and confining **“all people...”** to the time period of the Prophet (ﷺ) certainly can be seen in light of the history of those years; he experienced the intensity and culmination of Yahūdī ill will and antagonism in Madinah, al-Ḥijāz, and Arabia, along with the enmity and aggression of Makkah’s *mushriks*. In this time frame, the Christians did not express the same level of animosity and antagonism coupled with a hostile disposition. Rather, the Prophet (ﷺ) experienced closeness and fondness from the Christians in ancient Ethiopia as they afforded asylum-seeking Muslims from Makkah a refuge and a sanctuary. As

the Prophet (ﷺ) began to experience the horrible extent of the Makkan *mushriks*' persecution of the pioneering Muslims with him, he sent the latter to al-Ḥabashaḥ where they found an accommodating Christian domain. The reference to warm Christians here in this *āyah* may have been particularly aimed at these good-natured Christians in this domain of East Africa.

Other corroborating information about the Christian attitude toward Islam demonstrates that when the Prophet (ﷺ) corresponded with the emperors and monarchs of the time it turns out that the most courteous replies came from those who were Christians. It is said that Heraclius, the Roman emperor in Syria, tried to convince his subjects about Islam, but they were not responsive, as they had no idea what Islam meant; therefore, he sent a mild-mannered response to the Prophet (ﷺ).⁵⁶⁵ Al-Muqawqis, the Egyptian Coptic ruler, was even more polite in his reply to the Prophet's (ﷺ) letter, even though he was not as inclined to Islam; he even sent a gift to the Prophet (ﷺ).⁵⁶⁶ Not long after the Prophet (ﷺ) passed on to heavenly company, only a matter of less than one generation, the people in Syria and Egypt would see the light and flock to Islam in droves and legions — Monophysites, Copts, and those belonging to other Christian denominations.

Islamic historical chronicles record that the Prophet's (ﷺ) emissary to al-Muqawqis was Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta'aḥ. After handing the Prophet's (ﷺ) letter to the Coptic ruler, Ḥāṭib exchanged the following words with the king,

Ḥāṭib: Before you [O king] there was a man who claimed to be the sovereign lord, so Allah struck back at him in this life and in the coming one. This [false] sovereign was an instrument for Allah's revenge and a recipient of it. Thus, heed the lessons of others and be not the object in lessons to others.

Al-Muqawqis: We have a religion of our own that we will not part with except for that which is better [than our religion].

Ḥāṭib: We call upon you to consider the *dīn* of Islam that

Allah has made sufficient. This Prophet [Muhammad (ﷺ)] called upon the masses and his vehement opposition came from the Quraysh; and the most hostile to him were the Yahūd, while the closest to him are the Christians. By Allah! In the same manner that Moses foretold of Jesus, it was Jesus who foretold of Muhammad. We call you to the Qur'an in the same manner that you call the people of the Torah to the Gospel. Every prophet eventually has people who become his constituency; thus his right upon them is their obedience to him. We [Muslims] do not bar you from the religion of the Messiah, rather we demand it [as there is no difference between them].

Al-Muqawqis: I have looked into the affair of this Prophet and found that he does not postulate the undesirable and does not proscribe the desirable. I did not find him to be a wayward illusionist, nor a false priest. I found him to have hints of prophethood by his disclosure of things concealed, as well as his pronouncement of things clandestine. I will look into this further...⁵⁶⁷

Another citation to this end is the conversation between 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ who was sent by the Prophet (ﷺ) to the king of Oman, Jayfar ibn al-Jalandī, and his brother, 'Abd ibn al-Jalandī. 'Amr first went to 'Abd as he was known to be less harsh and of a higher moral character than his brother. 'Amr relayed to him the message and meaning of Islam, and then the two engaged in a short dialogue,

'Abd: You are a son of aristocracy; how did your father respond [to the Islamic message]?

'Amr: He died and did not commit himself to the Prophet. I wished he had become a Muslim, and a sincere one for that matter. I also was like my father until I was enlightened and guided to Islam.

'Abd: When did you follow him [Muhammad (ﷺ)]?

'Amr: Not long ago.

'Abd: Where was it that you became a Muslim?

‘Amr: At the Negus [king of Abyssinia], (and then ‘Amr told him that the Negus himself became a Muslim).

‘Abd: But what did his people do with his reign?

‘Amr: They backed him and followed him.

‘Abd: Did the priests and monks follow?

‘Amr: Yes.

‘Abd: But ‘Amr, watch what you are saying; nothing can be more distasteful and scandalous than lying!

‘Amr: But I have not lied as our *dīn* does not permit it.

‘Abd: But did not Heraclius know about the king of Ethiopia becoming a Muslim?

‘Amr: Of course.

‘Abd: But how do you know about that?

‘Amr: The Ethiopian king, before becoming a Muslim, used to transfer valuables [assets] to Heraclius, but when he [Negus] became a Muslim he said, “Now I, by God, will not give him a coin.” This locution was passed on to Heraclius; so his brother said to him, “Are you going to permit your proxy to get away with not paying you the due, and to have him assume a contrived religion besides yours?” Heraclius replied, “But the man chose a religion for himself [of his free will]; what am I to do with him? Had it not been for reasons of preserving my domain I would have done the same thing.”

‘Abd: Are you sure of what you are saying?

‘Amr: By Allah, I say the truth to you.

‘Abd: Tell me what does he [the Prophet (ﷺ)] prescribe and proscribe?

‘Amr: He prescribes obedience to Allah (ﷻ) and he proscribes disobeying Him. He requires people to have close family relations and virtue and he forbids them from tyranny and aggression. He prohibits adultery, intoxicants, paganism, idolatry, and the cross.

‘Abd: But this call of his is all pleasing and beautiful. If my brother would agree with me we would ride together until we reach him [Muhammad (ﷺ)] and profess our

faith in him. But my brother is keen on his dominion,
and is afraid to become a lackey.⁵⁶⁸

It is said that later on ‘Abd and his brother Jayfar both became Muslims.⁵⁶⁹ These are all illustrations of how the Christians in and around the Arabian Peninsula at that time were prone to Islam. They had a type of affinity with the committed and sacrificing Muslims. Those Christian kings who stopped short of becoming Muslims did so because they were careful not to lose power and control over their territories. According to some historical accounts the Negus of Abyssinia, Aṣḥamaḥ, also brought his circle of clergymen and officials into Islam.⁵⁷⁰ Unfortunately, it further appears that Islam never inundated Ethiopia after Aṣḥamaḥ passed away, as the Muslims did not concern themselves with providing Islamic governance there as they had in Egypt and Syria, among other places. As to why Muslim history unfolded this way needs more investigation and research. With this information, it would be fair to say that during the epoch of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the committed Muslims around him, the Christians showed much more understanding and rapport with the early Muslims as contrasted with the antipathy and animosity expressed by the Yahūd and the secular deprecators of Allah’s authority (the *mushriks*).

Could distance have been a factor here? The Yahūd and *mushriks* at the beginning were in the midst of it all — Makkah in the case of the *mushriks* and Madinah in the case of both the Yahūd and the *mushriks*. Then, when the Muslims were confronted with armies and militaries belonging to “Christians” in the deteriorating Roman Empire, there appeared to be empathy by the Jews in Syria and Spain with the plight of the Muslims. And as the Christians moved away from the Gospel to imperialism their hatred and hostility began to compete with that of the Yahūd and Arabian *mushriks*.

In the interpretation of the verses in the Zionist-poisoned Torah and the imperialist-adulterated Gospel, the fluctuation between hostility and affection toward the committed Muslims seems to be grounded in each one’s self-interest and worldly priorities.

The essence of Judaism and Christianity have nothing at their core that militates against covenant-carrying Muslims. Nonetheless, there are now nation-states, corporate interests, and class priorities within Muslim countries that have copycatted the Zionists and imperialists to foment “Islamic” equivalents of political Judaism and political Christianity — away from the sense of the Qur’an and the spirit of the Prophet (ﷺ). The Zionist state of Israel and the imperialist state of America have become the pacesetters for Muslim rulers polluted with every nuance and sin of nationalism, class interests, and business precedence. One way of looking at the bubbling political friction between all these parties is to see how each specific argument for war in this world of Muslims, Christians, and Jews can be traced to the accumulation of wealth and power by a few (Jews, Christians, and Muslims) through the exclusion from wealth and power of the many (Muslims, Christians, and Jews).

The political poison oozing out of Zionism and imperialism has contaminated and envenomed Judaism and Christianity. The high interests of Zionist czars and imperialist emperors may dictate internecine warfare in which there are “Christians” killing Christians, and even “Jews” killing Jews. In the not so distant past, Christians were killing Christians in the Balkans, while they were at war with the Ottomans. Even Christians belonging to the same denomination have been at war with each other. The nationalism of Britain was recently pitted against the nationalism of Germany in WWII, and all the victims were “Christian.”

In this lesson, the clear message is that the more politically consumed “Christians and Jews” are the more hostile they are toward the committed Muslims. Conversely, the more religious or spiritually observant they are, the more they can identify with the committed Muslims. Parsing things a little more, it is the Yahūd who are consumed by politics, hence their intense dislike for committed Muslims; whereas the Christians, who are apt to be apolitical, are therefore more appreciative of what the Muslims stand for.

On a political scale, the Yahūd and the *mushriks* rank all the way at the top. This explains why they harbor so much rancor to-

ward Muslims who seek to socialize a divine program that seeks to encompass all the activities of man within its fold. The Yahūdī and *mushrik* counter-agenda is concerned with power manipulation and social exploitation and for this reason they are in a head-on collision with the committed Muslims who are concerned with the “responsibility” of exercising power for the purpose of delivering social equality and freedom to oppressed peoples. Thus, the Yahūd (Zionists) and the *mushriks* (imperialists) have elements of arrogance and contempt for others in their disposition — an overbearing pride evidenced by a superior manner toward inferiors. This carries into aggressive behavior and imperialist ventures. Underlying this Yahūdī and *mushrik* consonance is a fervid strain of racism and nationalism. The priorities in this ungodly political orientation are materialism over spiritualism, self-importance and a scorn for the “other,” and an absence of altruism and brotherly love. From what is known of Islamic history in the Muhammadi era, the Arabian *mushriks* were a little more humane than the Yahūd; they were also more generous and selfless. They may have even been more open-minded and “liberal” than the Yahūd. It is because of this that the *āyah* places the Yahūd above and beyond the *mushriks* when it comes to hostility toward committed Muslims. Moreover, the Yahūd were historically engrossed in harassing and killing some of Allah’s Prophets (ﷺ), and they tried to repeat the same crime with Muhammad (ﷺ). The attitude of racism in the Yahūd even becomes ideological as it justifies the mistreatment of the goyim (Gentiles).⁵⁷¹

Before the Jews were Zionized they lived in relative calm and comfort within predominantly Islamic societies in the Holy Land, the Levant, North Africa, Yemen, and al-Andalus. This was so because Islamic society was, by and large, a society of justice; its rulers may have politically gone off course, but society itself still honored the tenets of fairness and equality. Besides, the hostility between “Christians” and “Jews” resulted in a deep-seated ghettoization of the Jews who realized that in the Muslim world they had no ghettos. But despite experiencing the inclusiveness of Islam and the attending security, they still could not stop being race-centered and self-interest inclined. They cannot, up to this very day, speak the

truth about their inability to reciprocate fairness toward the Muslims around them.

Devout Christians are Closer to Islam than Ceremonial Jews

The contrast between those Yahūd and *mushriks* with their unrelenting hostilities on the one hand and the Christians with their emotional disposition and character on the other hand could not be more stark. The difference is that observant Christians are not arrogant or conceited, as the *āyah* says, “...because there are **priests and monks among them, and because they are not tending to arrogance...**” This is what makes them empathic and amicable toward committed Muslims. Christian clergymen and monks when they are not under the spell of emperors, imperial rulers, and secular chiefs, are conscientious and magnanimous enough to see what the committed Muslims stand for. A monk may be defined as a man in religion, who, bound by the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, abandons all worldly attractions to live in a community according to a set discipline in order to devote himself to God and the good of his neighbor. At first, monks led solitary lives, but later came to live together in communities.⁵⁷² The *āyah* may be referring here to a central belief in Christianity that has been eclipsed by materialism and imperialism: the matter of *pride*. Pride, as many Christians are supposed to understand, is an inordinate love of one’s own excellence; in other words, an inordinate self-esteem. Christian theology holds that pride is a most dangerous passion, because it is so natural and subtle, and also because it branches out into so many other vices. Those filled with pride become vainglorious, fond of the approval of men, ambitious, in love with worldly honors, hypocritical, conceited, disdainful, obstinate, contentious, and the list goes on. Pride is essentially a lie because it is founded on a falsehood; it is essentially a robbery because it is the taking to oneself what belongs to God. It is the very root of all evil,

Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words:
for from it all perdition [the abode of Satan and the

forces of evil] took its beginning (Tobit, 4:14, Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition).

Pride is considered by Christian moral theologians to be one of the Seven Deadly Sins, and is said by some to be the worst of all and the root of all the rest.⁵⁷³ The first sin of Adam and Eve (ⓧ) was in response to the temptation, "...and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis, 3:5). This is the temptation to go beyond their creaturely status and usurp the place of God. The theme of human pride is continued in the story of the Tower of Babel, which the people built in order to reach to heaven and make a name for themselves (Genesis, 11:1–9). St. Augustine declared that "pride is the origin and head of all evils," and he points out that it was pride that led the devil to rebel against God. The devil has no body, and this was interpreted to mean that the sins of the spirit (including pride) are worse than the sins of the flesh. These views have been restated in contemporary times by some Christian scholars, who hold that the sins of the flesh flow from the evil will of the spirit that has ceased to trust in God and has set itself up as its own supreme (paramount).⁵⁷⁴

Pride takes many forms. Pride of power is perhaps the most dangerous and produces patterns of domination and even dictatorship. But pride of knowledge and pride of righteousness are considered particularly repulsive. Not all pride is sinful, for there is the proper pride of self-respect and the satisfaction of doing something well. Aristotle saw this proper pride as a virtuous mean between the vices of arrogance and self-deprecation.⁵⁷⁵

If this definition of *pride* was located at the heart of racism and nationalism, it would demonstrate how there is a repulsion for pride among true Christians the same way there is an attraction toward it by the Yahūd. This is the overall portrait of the two opposite sides in this *āyah* as they show either hostility or affinity with the committed Muslims. There may be individuals or less likely, even communities, within these two incompatible sides that are the exception to the rule, as each religious community has its good as well as its bad members, **"And from the people of**

Moses, there is an *ummaḥ* that guides by virtue of the truth and does justice by it” (7:159).

Generally speaking, though, the laws that are taught and learned within the “Jewish” tradition cultivate a racism — as everything is peculiar to the people and race of Israel. Therefore, what has become institutional in that tradition is a body of law and a conceptual frame of reference that orbits around self-importance and self-centeredness. It would appear that the Jews have put themselves into a no-win situation. Firstly, they confine themselves to a genetic domain by defining a Jew through the birth channel, that is, a Jew is one who is born to a Jewish mother. Conversion to Judaism, for all practical purposes, does not exist. Secondly, they throw up a wall of racism that is meant to canonize their peculiar difference so that they do not have to assimilate into the larger gentile society around them. And finally, they nurture the social antagonism that causes host societies to turn against them, sometimes without violence and other times with horrible violence.

The initial decision by the “Jews” to limit their numbers by a “Judaic maternal birth” never offered them the protection they needed in the flow of time and history as other peoples and “Gentiles” were reproducing and multiplying in relatively much larger numbers. Such a self-contained approach may have been understandable in the initial history of the Jews when it was necessary for them to keep their distance from elites and peoples who belonged more to tyranny and injustice than to God and justice. But it is not in accordance with God’s will to superimpose the tyranny of the Pharaoh, and whatever mechanisms were necessary to undergird it, on the coming generations of the human condition.

Assume, for argument’s sake, that the Jews were to “open up” Judaism and become an inclusive “religion” like Islam. This would mean that the Judaism of old would be virtually assimilated into the world of the Gentiles. The forces of the gentile world would be so powerful that “Judaism” itself, hitherto a religion of the few, would be diluted almost to the extent of breaking down and diminishing altogether. Their attitude of not mixing with “others” in their host societies as a means of protecting the faith can be un-

derstood in the time of Moses (ﷺ) and the years and ages prior to Islam. But it would no longer be transparent when Islam is now well known and the true Jews would have little to lose by adhering to Islam, as they concurrently part with their tribalism, nationalism, and racism — the source of almost all of their existential problems. Despite all of their historical rhetoric about having to escape from persecution and pogroms going here or there, the fact of the matter is that Jews have not been in an “escape mode” from an oppressive land (Egypt) into a liberated one (the Holy Land) ever since the inception of Islam. The world changed with the rise of Islam. There are Muslims in this world who are as strongly opposed to the Pharaoh (and his likes) as were the followers of Moses (ﷺ). The Jews will be committing a mistake of genocidal proportions if they believe and convince themselves that Muslims are the equivalents of heathens and pagans.

The long and drawn-out history of the Children of Israel has been witness to a transient scriptural rationalization for “nationalism.” But that was not meant to be a model for human social life ad infinitum; rather, it was meant as a survival mechanism that would be discarded when no longer necessary. The prophets of Israel such as David and Solomon (ﷺ) were sent to nurture an independent character for God’s people, but not to cultivate a prejudiced nationalism or a bigoted racism. Then came Jesus the Messiah (ﷺ) who circumvented their social ego as he tried to turn the materialistic obsession associated with Israeli racism into an understanding of the human condition. He wanted these ethnically-centered Children of Israel to turn from their selfishness to his selflessness, and to go beyond the mechanics of the law to the morals of the law. In repudiating the luxuries and lavishness of this world, he tried to teach them how awful it is to be house-proud and purse-proud. By imploring them to love their enemies, he hoped they would surmount their self-centeredness, and by reminding them to forgive, he longed for them to give up their awful trait of vengefulness. All of this was to be a messianic introduction to the advent of Muhammad (ﷺ) who would change all the dynamics the Jews employed to justify the prejudice that members of their race are intrinsically su-

perior to members of other races, and thus end their discriminatory, abusive, and dissembling practices. Muhammad (ﷺ) was the convergence of the spirit's tolerance with society's justice.

The people who could not and would not learn from Jesus (ﷺ) — the Yahūd — remained as stubborn as ever in their egotistic and nationalistic pomposity. As history illustrates, these Jesus-deniers would thereafter become more hostile to Muhammad (ﷺ) than those who accepted and believed in Jesus (ﷺ). Among the latter were the priests and monks who may have come from the Israeli believers in Jesus (ﷺ) or from other people. The bottom line is that they were in sympathy, of sorts, with the new scripture-bearers, the committed and selfless Muslims. This is what was responsible for the massive unprecedented movement of conforming Christians into Islam, and Allah (ﷻ) has spoken the truth,

Those who shall follow the [last] Apostle, the unlettered Prophet, whom they shall find described in the Torah that is with them, and [later on] in the Gospel: [the Prophet] who will enforce upon them the self-evident good and deter them from the self-evident calumnious, and make lawful to them the good things of life, and forbid them the bad things, and lift from them their burdens and the shackles that were upon them [aforetime]... (7:157).

The burdens and shackles in this *āyah* refer to the literal and vigorous injunctions of the Torah pertaining to dietary laws and other legal and technical issues, as well as the austere and forbidding standards of self-denial that are to be found in the traits of some of the followers of the Gospel.

Another indicator of the truth of this comprehensive, yet succinct, *āyah*, which alludes to Christians being closer to Islam than Jews even as both of them give different meanings to what was in fact the same message from God, is that more Christians accept Islam than do Jews. This appears to be a fact applicable to every generation, past and present.

The appeal that attracts people to Islam is its intrinsic glow and logical power, along with its emotional depth. But non-Muslims confuse Islam with those Muslims who practice or purport to practice it. In the present day, the “Muslims” are weak, and weakness does not attract others. Over the past two centuries, succeeding generations of so-called Muslims have incrementally abandoned the higher responsibilities of this Qur’an. Furthermore, in today’s world, there are missionary Muslims (*du’āt*) who are busy projecting their understanding of Islam without its authority dimension and without presenting Islam as the system of social justice for which humanity has been longing these many years. And to cap it off, there are governments in Muslim countries that lay claim to Islam despite the fact that all of their official functionaries are anything but Islamic. The hereditary and name-only Muslims who have never applied their critical thinking abilities to the *āyāt* of the Qur’an are also a pitiful lot when it comes to modernity and civilization; they have nothing to offer except as consumers and patrons of others’ modernities and civilizations.

Absent Islam and committed Muslims, today’s appeal lies with those who have industries, technologies, and power; it lies with those who purport to be Christians, Jews, Chinese, or even Hindus. This infatuation with materialistic modernity and modernism has swept up many unsuspecting people in its wake, Muslims included. Therefore, the faint “Muslims” who are holding on to whatever Islamic rituals they can perform have nothing to offer the “other.” The way life operates, it is the other who can come into Muslim lands and set up education systems, manufacture public opinion, and create governmental structures — and the “Muslims” are quick to oblige. This gap between failing “Muslims” and ascending materialists has not gone unnoticed by some thinking Muslims in our time. However, they think that the way for Muslims to catch up with and pass the materialists is to begin to build an industrial infrastructure and to churn out technology and applied science graduates. This is partially true, but to reach the level of accomplishment where technology and discovery service social justice imperatives, the Muslims will have to be themselves. They will have to go back

to the drawing board and assume their full-fledged independent Islamic character and orientation, and then work forward from there. In due time they will harness the tools of modernity and civilization.

When the Muslims regenerate themselves others will begin to take notice of who they are and what they stand for. In the competitive lane of life, where their Qur'anic creativity will carry the day, they will begin to have an irreversible impact upon those who harbor no rancor or ill will toward them. At this moment of progress, they will realize that there are discerning Christians who will instinctively know the Muslims to be genuine and sincere, and many of these Christians will flock toward the Islamic course of onward and forward motion. All the same, this will not happen until the committed and consistent Muslims are able to relive all the vital and relevant dimensions of their Islam. As events begin to unfold at this level of activity and responsibility, the Muslims will look around and inevitably realize that the Jews have not been impressed. That is because they have an inborn hostility toward the last covenant bearers — the committed Muslims.

Some legitimate questions may arise concerning the points made above. For instance, if these Christians are closer to Islam and the Muslims than the “Jews” and the *mushriks*, then why did they launch the Crusades against their putative cousins in faith? Were not the European Crusades against Islam on par with, even in excess of, everything the “Jews” and the *mushriks* may have done to the Muslims? Beyond this ugly history, what about the hundreds of years of military clashes between Muslims and Christians, particularly during Ottoman rule?

Though there may not be a definitively satisfying answer to these questions, part of it may lie in the fact that Islam, which is so close to the spirit of Christianity and which came to adjust and correct what went wrong within Christianity, may not have been understood by the European soldiers who were the cannon fodder of those Crusades. The image of Muslims was so tarnished in the minds of these “Christians” that they were willing to engage in destructive and deadly military campaigns lasting hundreds of years, not to mention the hundreds of thousands of lives of their own consumed

by unending war. The Muslims, due to the influence of a church in contempt of God, were projected as heathens, pagans, and followers of Satan. Correspondence and books were written, and sermons were given by functionaries of the Church to move an illiterate European public to “free” the Holy Land from Muslim infidels.

Another important historical reality to remember is that the spirit of the Gospel that calls for love, meekness, altruism, and peace was never triumphant in Europe over the ghost of war, selfishness, arrogance, racism, and aggression on earth. These nasty traits had peaked during the years of the Crusades, and made a comeback during the colonial wars of occupation, which are still ongoing. Euro-aggression had its historical bouts of annihilation as the unbelievers were annihilated throughout Europe; then this pulse for annihilating the other turned against the Muslims in the Holy Land where the Crusaders tried to annihilate the Muslims in Palestine and its surrounding countries. This nihilistic pulse in Europe even turned against itself when there were some Europeans at war with others because of religious differences, political ambitions, or expansionist policies. These European imposed wars of aggression are in the spirit of Satan and not in that of the Savior.

This brings us to an important theme in this *sūrah*, which is the distinction between the Jews and Zionists on the one hand and that between the Christians and imperialists on the other. The Crusades then and Israel now are two primary expressions of imperialism and Zionism. They have nothing to do with Christianity and Judaism, even though officials and well-known personalities have used, and continue to use, Christianity and Judaism to serve the geostrategic objectives of imperialism and Zionism.

The wars between Muslims and Christians may be attributed to each group or both groups vacating their relationship with God. Sometimes misunderstandings do occur, and that may develop into all-out war. The Ottoman Sultanate, which for most of its tenure was a Muslim political power adrift from Islamic principles, conquered many European territories by force. But then when power shifted from the Ottomans to the Europeans, the latter wanted to take revenge against the Ottomans. In this instance, Europeans in

the Balkans may have utilized Christ and the cross as a recruiting or motivational tool to fight against Muslims. But then, what happened after that? These Europeans who were exploiting Christ and the cross turned against themselves in what became humanity's only two world wars. The preachers of war within a Muslim polity that has gone awry and within a Christian nihilistic elite wind up doing the same thing: using a religious pretext to stir up the masses and to march them off to grinding wars that have no basis in scripture and no justification in the Books of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (ﷺ).

From a different angle, some people may ask whether the Jews are closer to the Muslims because they too are monotheists, meaning they believe in God's *tawhīd*, while the Christians are tri-theists, meaning they believe in a trinity? And if this is so, how can Christians be closer to Muslims than the Jews? In this regard it can be said that even though devout Christians believe in a trinity, the concept itself is so confusing, so illogical, and so obscure that they tend to dismiss it from their practical lives. Therefore, in the overall picture, the solitary element of an almost imaginary "trinity," even though it is a dominant theological tenet, has had minimum impact on real, down to earth, behavioral contact. Human relations, human liaison, and human interaction are the stuff of which human understandings are made. And in this world of human-to-human relations, a Christian will understand a Muslim and a Muslim will understand a Christian, provided that the class, national, and other discriminatory barriers have been removed. This though cannot happen so naturally between Muslims and Jews, simply because the Jews have a racist barrier between them and the others, Muslims, of course, included.

The Yahūdī Grudge against Islam Is Not Going to Go Away

The nature of the information in the *āyah* requires the committed Muslims to be more cognizant of the reality it is describing, “**You will surely find that, of all people, the most belligerent to those who are committed [to Allah] are the Yahūd as well as those who consort others [with the authority of Allah].**”

The thing that should grab the Muslims’ attention is the identification of the Yahūd by name, which takes place up front to indicate the type of people who are truly and authentically hostile toward Muslims on their way to Allah (ﷺ). Combining this unmistakable designation with the facts of history, from the dawn of Islam in Madinah until this very moment, testifies to the fact that the Yahūdī animus and aggravation toward the committed Muslims has always been harsh, severe, deep, persistent, and longer in duration than all other categories of people, including the *mushriks*.

Yahūdī animosity burst onto the scene from the first moment the struggling and sacrificing Muslims achieved their independent state in Madinah. Their clever and deceptive maneuvers commenced the very day the Muslims became an *ummaḥ*. The Qur’an itself is the record of this Yahūdī warfare against Islam, the Prophet (ﷺ) of Islam, and the Ummah of Islam from time immemorial. And over the last 14 centuries, things have gotten worse. The Yahūd’s grudge, spite, and venom through their Israeli nation-state has the potential of wrecking the world and ruining humanity.

The Prophet (ﷺ), upon entering Madinah, signed a coexistence agreement with these Yahūd. He gave them the courage to look at and consider the meanings and purposes of Islam, and had they done so impartially, they would have been able to see that Islam is just a continuation of their own creed, minus their self-imposed distortions. But as has always been the case with the Yahūd, they thought they were above honoring the terms of coexistence, these being with Allah’s final Prophet (ﷺ). The Yahūd are simply an elite that feels it has *carte blanche* to violate its oaths, accords, agreements, and arrangements, because the other signatories are something less than human, to be taken advantage of by “God’s chosen.” This holds true in their covenant with God and in their commit-

ments to their prophets. If the politicians in Muslim countries would only read this Qur'an, the Muslims en masse would not be going down the dark alleys they find themselves in. To this end Allah (ﷻ) says,

Is it not so that every time they made a promise [to Allah], some of them cast it aside? No, indeed: most of them are not committed [to Allah]. And [even now], when there has come to them an apostle from Allah, confirming the truth already in their possession, some of those who were granted revelation aforetime cast the divine Writ behind their backs as though unaware [of what it says] (2:100–101).

The first sign of Yahūdī anger and ire occurred when the Aws and Khazraj, the two historical tribal Arabian enemies in Yathrib, became united as the Anṣār. This unity preempted the Yahūd from playing the extremes against one another; they now had no inroads into a factionalized Madinah. The leadership and authority of Muhammad (ﷺ) meant that the Yahūd could no longer have any corrupting, exploitative, or divisive impact on the affairs of Madinah. Since then, the Yahūd have used all the tools and weapons within their diabolic reach. They have leveraged all the centuries of experience dating back to the Babylonian exile, their slavery in Egypt, and their humiliation during the Roman Empire. And even though the Muslims and Arabs have accommodated and rescued them in their worst times, they have paid the Muslims and Arabs back with a visceral revenge and an inbred secret plan whose final chapter is playing out nowadays.

Muslim history is precious even though it has had its bouts with political disorientation; and so no one should think the Muslims are going to forget who they once were, what they have become, and how they will come back. They can learn from their own selves; they do not need orientalist and Zionists telling them who they are and who they are not. This Qur'an is their past, present, and future. And if they care to look at it with open minds, they will

discover that the Yahūd instigated Arabia against Islam and its committed sons. All the *mushrik* factions and power centers in Arabia were incited and organized by the Yahūd to form an alliance that would, in their calculations, bleed the Muslims to destruction and death. With whatever perversion of mind and soul, these Yahūd had the temerity to say that the Arabian *mushriks*, “... **have a better sense of direction than the committed Muslims...**” (4:51).

When the Yahūd were initially defeated by the committed Muslims on the grounds of truth and justice, they did not give up and instead tried to achieve the same ends through more surreptitious means, beginning to burrow into Islam through books and “scholarly” works. The only book that has been spared their termite effect is the invulnerable Qur’an. Allah (ﷻ) has assured everyone that no one will ever be able to tamper with this scripture — and that assurance will live on until the end of time. The Yahūd’s sly-boots have also tried to march in lockstep with the Muslim rank and file. They feed on newcomers to Islam on the fringes of the Ummah, infusing and infecting them with anything that will “tick them off” against other Muslims. On the outside, these Yahūd traffic among the external enemies of Muslims, trying to agitate them and gear them up for clashes and wars to reverse any social and structural Islamic accomplishment. It would seem like after all these centuries, the Yahūd are today — verbally, ideologically, and militarily — the demagogues and fomenters of all sorts of warfare against Muslims, who are finally beginning to wake up to their historical as well as future selves.

It is the Yahūd who are driving the European, American, evangelical, and racist forces around the world to try to smother Islam in its cradle. The Yahūd are the ones who manufacture public heroes and national figures to launch false starts, half-baked solutions, and mutually ruinous dictatorships in the Islamic domain. Concerning almost all axes, alliances, and blocs of political and military power around the world that have anything against the Muslims, one may rest assured that the Yahūdī hand is somewhere in it, if not outright guiding it. Zionism and imperialism with all their subdivisions are locked in a life-and-death standoff with the

gradually growing opposition that comes, and can only come, from Muslims who know what it is all about. Consider the *āyah* again, **“You will surely find that, of all people, the most inimical to those who are committed [to Allah] are the Yahūd and those who equate others [with Allah].”**

The treasonous individual who went out of his way to organize an alliance of Arabian *mushriks* against Islamic Madinah, liaising between Banū Qurayzah and the Qurayshī enemies of the Islamic state, was a Yahūdī (Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf). The person who fabricated some of the Prophet's (ﷺ) hadiths and corrupted the facts about the biography and lifetime struggle of the Prophet (ﷺ) was a Yahūdī (Ka'b al-Aḥbār).⁵⁷⁶ The person(s) who stirred up a mob mentality, bringing desperate people together on the basis of manufactured rumors and gossip, during the tenuous reign of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān and the ensuing chain reactions were the Yahūd. Those who were out and about in the Ottoman state fanning the flames of nationalism and ethnicism, inducing breakaway tendencies and palace coups, and replacing a constitutional *shari'ah* with secular laws and bylaws during the time of Ottoman Sultan 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, which finally culminated in the demise of Islamic central power through the rise of Mustafa Kemal, were the Yahūd. In our century and generation the most vocal voices with the deepest bitterness and most acrid mental rejection of today's Islamic revival are the Yahūd.

The intellectual waves of our times have been made by the Yahūd. Hidden from much discussion is the fact that institutional atheism and ideological materialism sprang from a Yahūdī (Karl Marx). The person who introduced sex and bestiality as tools to interpret human behavior, and thus mainstreamed lust and sexual arousal was a Yahūdī (Sigmund Freud). It appears there inevitably are Yahūd lurking behind theories and intellectual material that are destructive of the divine and catastrophic to the sacred.

The warfare by Arabian *mushriks* against Islam lasted one generation and it was over. The Persian resistance to Islam was also terminated in a few decades. But the ongoing war by the Yahūd against Islamic self-determination has not stopped from the Islamic Madinah

of Muhammad (ﷺ) to the non-Islamic Madinah of today, itself under the command and control of Zionists and imperialists through the proxies they created for that purpose: the current family regime of Banū Sa'ūd. Zionism, which has germinated the Israeli nation-state, is at the center of this limitless hate of the Muslims, who are now coming of political age. The only parallel arguably on par with the Zionist occupation of Palestine was the European crusading occupation of that same land about 1,000 years ago.

Those obsequious politicians who are walking the diplomatic path with their Zionist counterparts would do better to ascertain this tablespread of information, which is from the most reliable source of information there is. The cold hard facts are there for all to hear, learn, and see: the Yahūd are made from an evil disposition toward responsible and committed Muslims. Their bosoms boil with a vengeance against Islam and its Prophet (ﷺ). This core characteristic of the Yahūd cannot be ignored; it is spelled out here in no uncertain terms. The only force on earth capable of seeing through the Yahūd's shenanigans and defeating them with no airs of vengeance or disposition toward excessive punishment are the Muslims, who are formidable and not just ancestral/traditional material. The committed Muslims, when they belonged to Allah (ﷻ), thwarted the Yahūd; now that they have become the omnium gatherum of their egos, they can see what has become of them: social copycats, political sycophants, and intellectual inferiors to these same Yahūd and their minions. A ray of hope, though, is on the horizon as the gathering Islamic tide will soon sweep away the garbage of Zionism and the scorched earth of imperialism in a climactic act that will bring back justice to the billions of people who have been crushed by this two-horned evil.

Distinguishing between Political and Religious Christians

And you will surely find that, of all people, they who say, “Behold, we are Christians,” come closest to feeling affection for those who are committed [to Allah]: this is because there are priests and monks among them, and because these are not given to arrogance.

For, when they come to understand what has been bestowed from on high upon this Apostle, you can see their eyes overflow with tears, because they recognize something of its truth; [and] they say, “O our Sustainer! We do commit [to its truth]; make us one, then, with all who bear witness to the truth. And how could we fail to commit to Allah and to whatever truth has come to us, when we so fervently desire that our Sustainer count us among the righteous?”

And for this, their commitment, Allah will reward them with gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide: for such is the requital of the doers of good; whereas they who are bent on denying the truth and giving the lie to Our power presence (*āyāt*) — they are destined for the blazing fire (5:82–86).

Here, Allah (ﷻ) brings the committed Muslims face to face with a particular kind of people: those who are the followers of Jesus (ﷺ), “...those who say, ‘We are Naṣārā.’” These are the ones who are close to the committed Muslims. This affinity and kinship is felt by the true and independent followers of Jesus (ﷺ), not by politicians and diplomats who happen to go to church or got baptized when they were born. This Qur’anic statement of truth and fact cannot be extended to include imperialists and crypto-Christians who have broken away from the companionship of Jesus (ﷺ). There is a segment of those who say they are Christians that can find common ground with the committed Muslims; and the *āyah* explains why, “...this is so because there are priests and monks among them, and because these are not given to arro-

gance.” This would mean that among the Christians there are those who can identify the truth once they are exposed to it as they are not arrogant or self-aggrandizing, the subtext here being that the outsized ego of the arrogant ones — the Yahūd and the *mushriks* — precludes them from accepting the truth from someone they regard to be an inferior.

But the Qur’an does not stop here. It goes on to give a more detailed description of who these truth-friendly Christians are,

For, when they come to understand what has been bestowed from on high upon this Apostle, you can see their eyes overflow with tears, because they recognize something of its truth; [and] they say, “O our Sustainer! We do commit [to You]; make us one, then, with all who bear witness to the truth. And how could we fail to commit ourselves to Allah and to whatever truth has come to us, when we so fervently desire that our Sustainer count us among the righteous?” (5:83–84).

Serious readers of the Qur’an should ponder deeply over this *āyah*. It portrays an image of some Christians who are brought to tears when they listen to the words of this holy Writ. This is not a simple matter in today’s world in which both the Muslims and Christians have governments and media mercantile establishments running a familiar line: Muslims and Christians are doomed to a relationship of grand hostility and unending conflict. This, in light of this *āyah*, is contrary to the truth. If Muslims and Christians were able to shed their imperialist and sub-imperialist governments, they would find they have tears of affinity in common. Tears are not only a consummate expression of sincerity, but in this *āyah*, the expression “**overflow with tears**” connotes profuseness, that is, what the Muslims and Christians have in shared values far exceeds their few differences.

The increasingly difficult undertaking in today’s world is to move Christians away from imperialism and to keep Muslims from being reactionary. Hence if the Christians were no longer imperial-

ists and the Muslims no longer reactionaries, there would be a type of normalization of relations between the world's Christians and Muslims, that is, a majority of the world's population. This is when people in the two camps, sans the interference of capitalist interests and media disinformation, will begin to hear each other and when communication will flow between the two sides. This is when scripture-based Christians will not only express their heartfelt perception of the Qur'anic scripture but, in addition to that, go on to stand for the truth that is so vividly expressed here in these words of wisdom, equality, justice, and cooperation. Along this line these Christians will see the light and say,

“O our Sustainer! We are committed [to Allah]; make us one, then, with all who bear witness to the truth. And how could we fail to commit to Allah and whatever truth has come to us, when we so fervently desire that our Sustainer count us among the righteous?” (5:83–84).

This is bearing witness unto God. Devout Christians want to be included on God's witness sheet. And as they begin to open themselves up to the truthful Qur'an in this way, the barriers between Christians and Muslims will come down and both, as one, will be in the service of God as much as they are in opposition to God's enemies. At this point these Christians will be able to understand what the Muslims stand for and who they really are; they will see that the images of Muslims presented in tabloid newspapers and sensationalist news shows and programs have been prefigured to accomplish imperialist and Zionist agendas, using both Muslims and Christians as pawns in their choreographed wars. The Qur'an is showing that when the mental climate is clear and the emotional atmosphere is clean, Christians will be able to identify, ascertain, and enlist in the course of this Qur'an and become part of the genuine scriptural struggle.

Many Muslims are aware of the historical movement of masses of Christians into the Qur'anic course 14 centuries ago. They know,

during their own lifetime, some Christians have realized that Islam is Christianity without religious and political imperialism, and thus became Muslims themselves. When the truth is so obvious, especially in a bona fide society conforming to it, everyone else around wants to belong to God and be His subject. How can any thinking and feeling human being listen to the truth and then not enlist therein. This is how hope for a more peaceful future is engendered and people begin to anticipate being in God's ring of the righteous, **“And how could we fail to commit to Allah and to whatever truth has come to us, when we so fervently desire that our Sustainer count us among the worthy?”**

So far, in this *sūrah* and to a lesser extent in previous ones, the Qur'an has reiterated in different ways the distinction between Christianity and imperialism on the one hand, and between Judaism and Zionism on the other hand. In a sense, the Qur'an, Allah's (ﷻ) definite word, is saying that, were it not for political Jews and political Christians (Zionists and imperialists), the larger majority of ordinary Christians and Jews, although Jews to a lesser extent, would be amenable and agreeable with God's final scripture. All the static and noise against Allah (ﷻ), Muhammad (ﷺ), and the Muslim Ummah comes from the “Christian” and “Jewish” renegades whose ideologies are imperialism and Zionism, respectively, and whose lip-service religions are Christianity and Judaism.

To give this Qur'anic pictorial some present-day context, it would be appropriate at this point to place some current information in the folds of these *āyāt*. The following description comes from a non-Muslim, an observer of current affairs,

Since Islam and Christianity began fighting in the seventh century, the holy land has often brought disillusionment: after the Crusades (all nine of them), after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and five centuries later for the British, in particular, after World War I. Unmindful Western nations may still be playing out the Crusader hand. As we will see, in the months before George W. Bush sent US troops into Iraq, his inspirational reading

each morning was a book of sermons by a Scottish preacher accompanying troops about to march on Jerusalem in 1917.

One of the more chilling themes of world history is the relationship between great wars and religious ambition. Holy war inflames religion into arrogance; and as all four of the nations we have examined were passing their apogees, there was talk about the antichrist and Armageddon, one of Christendom's familiar mass excitements. Fifth-century Romans whose forebears had cursed Nero now damned the Vandals and Huns. After the Reformation, popes and Spanish kings became the antichrist to Protestants. Then when France emerged as the major threat to Dutch power in 1672 and thereafter, the Netherlands named Louis XIV the antichrist. The papacy, in turn, gave crusade-like status to the Hapsburg Spanish battle against Protestant heresy.⁵⁷⁷

Although the Europe of 1900–1914 represented the world's most advanced civilization, talk of Armageddon and crusadership flourished. By 1914 military recruiting posters showed St. George, St. Michael, angels, and even Christ in the background. When hostilities began, German churchmen preached holy war in the east against Russia and in the west against "atheistic" France. Kaiser Wilhelm also pretended to be a Muslim sympathizer to bolster his alliance with Turkey and ambitions in the Middle East.⁵⁷⁸ Britons, however, singled out the Kaiser, and became almost manic over the return of the "Hun" and the threat to world civilization, against which God had marshaled his chosen island people. The most extreme blessing of the cannons came from the bishop of London, A.F. Winnington-Ingram, who called the war "a great crusade — we cannot deny it — to kill Germans." He advised *The Guardian* that "you ask for my advice in a sentence as to what the church is to do. I answer MOBILIZE THE NATION FOR A HOLY WAR."

We have seen that between 1870 and 1914 the British developed a “national psychosis” of war expectation, and the United States displayed a lesser version in 1917–1918. Several books have been written about the US churches’ militance, for the rhetoric among US clergy was as overblown as any in Europe. The fuller US parallel developed out of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. In the late-1970s and 1980s, the nascent religious right became a vocal participant, with the prominent evangelical ministers arguing that Christianity could not convert the world for Christ with Soviet atheism in the way. From Ronald Reagan’s White House down to grassroots congregations, the Soviet Union — the “evil empire” — became a biblical as well as ideological foe. Struck in the early-1980s by world turmoil seeming to match the prophecies of the Bible, Reagan brought up the a-word: Armageddon. In those years, end-times preachers named the USSR as the evil confederation supposedly referred to in the Bible.

When the Soviet Union collapsed between 1989 and 1991, US religious conservatives quickly identified a roster of replacements: Islam as the primary evil force and Iraq and Saddam Hussein, respectively, as (1) the reembodiment of the evil Babylon; and (2) the leading new contender for the role of antichrist. While few US officeholders indulged any candor, many evangelicals and fundamentalists did. In 2003 Richard Cizik, vice president of the National Association of Evangelicals, told *The New York Times* that “evangelicals have substituted Islam for the Soviet Union. The Muslims have become the modern-day equivalent of the Evil Empire.”

This gains plausibility if we think about how the US enthusiasm is at least partially replicating the evangelical, crusading, and Armageddon-flavored floundering in the British Empire during and just after World War I. Then as now British and American sanctimony rein-

forced each other, and the naivete and global moralizing that Woodrow Wilson added to British posturing and misjudgement would be equaled in 2003 by British prime minister Tony Blair's reinforcement of Washington's missteps in Iraq.⁵⁷⁹

The US political backdrop to post-September 11 involvement in the Middle East also involved the biblical lens that much of Bush's constituency uses to view events in the Holy Land. As I [the excerpt's author, Kevin Phillips] detailed earlier, the 65 to 70 percent of the 2004 Bush electorate that are born-again or that believe in Armageddon represent the party's essential constituency.

Thus, just as scholars of the British war mentality in the years prior to 1914 do well to study the patriotic bombast of the music halls, the stanzas of "Onward, Christian Soldiers," and the endless books predicting German invasions, fathoming the Bush electorate requires its own study materials. In communications terms the White House has depended on what Bruce Lincoln, David Domke, and other experts have called double coding — the biblical allusions that cluster so thickly in some speeches that the faithful among his listeners respond warmly.⁵⁸⁰ With so many liberty-and-freedom, good-versus-evil speeches year after year, Bush made himself a bridge between politics and religion for a large percentage of his electorate, cementing their fidelity.

Meanwhile, portions of the Christian-right message — too radical and divisive to be voiced directly from the Oval Office — went out through a network of preachers with whom Bush and his advisers kept in touch, could not endorse, but conspicuously never disavowed. These, of course, are stalwarts of the rapture, end times, and Armageddon such as Tim LaHaye, Jerry Falwell, John Hagee, and Jack Van Impe, whose books and television ministries reached half of the Bush electorate. Their radical — and over-imaginative — interpretation of the

Bible relentlessly magnified that of a defrocked Anglican priest, John Nelson Darby, who visited the United States eight times during the 1860s and 1870s, and ultimately gained far more adherents in the New World than he ever did in his native British Isles.⁵⁸¹

In a nutshell, what Darby proclaimed — and what spread like wildfire through the hugely successful books of Cyrus Scofield (the 1909 *Scofield Reference Bible*), Hal Lindsey (*The Late Great Planet Earth*, fifteen million sales through many editions since the 1960s), and Tim LaHaye (the *Left Behind* series, with multimedia sales in the sixty-million range) — is a world of turmoil now in the last of seven periods (dispensations) that will end with the rapture of true believers suddenly pulled into the sky to be with Christ.⁵⁸² Next follows the seven-year tribulation, when the satanic antichrist will arise in Europe and seize world power. At its end Christ and his armies will triumph in a great battle in Har-Megiddo, near Haifa in what is now Israel. From Jerusalem Christ will proclaim the start of a one-thousand-year reign of peace.

Through the 1990s, at least, most serious commentators ignored these books and broadcast ministries. But the election of George W. Bush, followed by the nation's post-September 11 responsiveness to a religious dialogue of good versus evil, sparked growing attention to LaHaye's series. In 2003 University of Wisconsin historian Paul Boyer, an expert on religious prophecy, estimated that "upwards of 40 percent" of Americans "believe that Bible prophecies detail a specific sequence of end-times events." To Boyer, religion's huge and unrecognized role in policy formation was on display in "the shadowy but vital way that belief in biblical prophecy is helping mold grassroots attitudes toward current foreign policy. As the nation debates a march toward war in the Middle East, all of us [Americans] would do well to pay attention to the beliefs of the vast company of Americans who read the headlines

and watch the news through a filter of prophetic belief.” The Bible includes no specific sequence of end-times events, as most theologians point out, so belief that it does is largely a product of a century of amplified Darbyism, which is consummated in the *Left Behind* series.

Boyer’s thesis is true enough. Similarly liberal observer Esther Kaplan analyzed the *Left Behind* series’ themes and arguments and concluded that “Bush’s Middle East policy perfectly aligns with the religious world-view of LaHaye and his millions of readers.” My own analysis, after reading several of his novels, is comparable. It was eerie, especially in the first few volumes published in the 1990s, to see so many Bush administration foreign-policy qualities anticipated: a global tribulation of good versus evil, the falsity of the United Nations, the emergence of an antichrist from Europe, the complicity of the French, the building of the second Babylon in Iraq, and its emergence as the headquarters of the antichrist.

Theologian Barbara Rossing, a professor of New Testament studies at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, argues that “the Rapture and the dispensationalist chronology is a fabrication... [T]he dispensationalist system’s supposedly clear-cut answers rely on a highly selective biblical literalism, as well as insertion of non-existent two-thousand year gaps and obvious re-definition of key terms. The system is not true to a literal reading of the Bible, as they claim.” Not only is this “a dangerous and false view of God and the Bible,” but “the events where dispensationalists identify the Bible’s cosmic plan coming to life are most of all world wars, bloody clashes, earthquakes, diseases, and other violent cataclysms. Disasters of sickening magnitude are welcomed by prophecy buffs because they evoke feelings that God is present and alive.” Regretting how “Rapture and Armageddon scenarios tap into Americans’ love for disaster films and sur-

vivalist plot lines,” Rossing posits the ultimate *Left Behind* message, “God so loved the world that He sent World War Three.” Still, for many of LaHaye’s readers the events of September 11 squared with the series’ cultural and political message. Small wonder that, according to a *Washington Post* poll in September of 2003, some 70 percent of the population thought that Saddam — as “the evil one” — was involved in that day’s attacks.

Three Catholic authors contributed rapture critiques that were well received in the Catholic press and elsewhere. Carl E. Olsen’s study *Will Catholics Be Left Behind?* appeared in 2003, Paul Thigpen’s *The Rapture Trap* was published in 2001, and David Currie’s *Rapture: The End-Times Error That Leaves the Bible Behind* came out in 2003. Compared with these, the mainline Protestant rebuttal was sparse. Still, the theological dismissals of the rapture certainly represent the view of mainline US Protestantism, as well as most of the US Catholic hierarchy.

An ounce of prevention, in a theological sense, would have been worth a pound of cure. In explaining readers’ reactions to the series, Amy Johnson Frykholm reported that women in particular said over and over that the novels “bring the Bible to life.” For many, the dispensational script brought these images “into a scheme of logic, assimilating them into a cosmic story they can understand.” Because mainline Christianity had not paid serious attention to the Cyrus Scofield-Hal Lindsey-Tim LaHaye viewpoint during the 1970s and 1980s when the Christian right was resurging, no contradictory theological foundation had been laid. As a result, the *Left Behind* message flooded persuasively into the thought processes of a considerable segment of American Protestants.

The rapture is just one dubious element of so-called dispensational pre-millennialism. However, before we look at pre-millennialism’s impact on US policy in the Middle East, it is useful to recall the calamitous pre-

World War I legacy of British evangelicalism, moral imperialism, and religious hawkishness. In some ways, although certainly not all, the United States picked up the evangelical baton Britain dropped nearly a century ago — and ironically, few Americans were more aware of Britain's 1917 invasion of the Turkish-controlled Holy Land than George W. Bush. Just before the US attack on Iraq in 2003, *Newsweek* ran a cover story on Bush's "defining [religious] journey: from reveler to revelation." In it, Howard Fineman described the president's immersion each morning in a book of evangelical sermons by Scottish Baptist Oswald Chambers.⁵⁸³ An itinerant preacher, Chambers spent his last days brining the gospel to Australian and New Zealand soldiers massed in Egypt in late-1917 for the invasion of Palestine and the intended Christmas-time capture of Jerusalem.

The Britain that let itself drift into the First World War was caught up in many psychologies relevant to early-21st-century America. The tide of evangelical, largely non-conformist Protestantism, despite important left-leaning and anti-war currents, was even more powerfully associated with the moral and political aura of the empire — witness the evangelicals who became imperialist symbols: David Livingstone, the explorer; General Charles Gordon, slain in Khartoum; and General Sir Henry Havelock, hero of the relief of Lucknow in the Indian Mutiny.⁵⁸⁴ The same moral insistence also spurred the 19th-century British Christian foreign-missionary movement.

By 1914 many British churches were all but draped in flags. According to historian Arthur Marwick,

Ministers of religion had embarked with enthusiasm upon the "Holy War." "The Church," as the minister of St. Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh, later recalled, "to an unfortunate degree had

become an instrument of the State and in too many pulpits the preacher had assumed the role of a recruiting sergeant. Almost every place of worship throughout the length and breadth of the land displayed the Union Jack, generally placed above the holy table, while some had great shields carrying the flags of all the allied nations... I said many things from my pulpit during the first six months of my ministry that I deeply regret. It is no excuse to say that many preachers were doing the same thing.”

Apart from any immediacy of Armageddon, wartime involvement in the Middle East had its own biblical dimension. More than any other European people, 19th- and early-20th-century Britons spoke of resettling Jews in the historic land of Israel. This inclination dated back to the 17th-century rule of Oliver Cromwell, whose Puritan belief in Scripture led him to readmit Jews to England (they had been expelled in 1290) and to express hope for their eventual return to Judea.⁵⁸⁵ Two imperially minded 19th-century prime ministers were also well disposed: Benjamin Disraeli (who promoted the idea in a book) and Viscount Palmerston (who thought a British client state in the Middle East would be geopolitically advantageous).⁵⁸⁶ By 1915 the subject came before the British war cabinet, at this point unsuccessfully, where its principal supporter was Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George, a liberal whose poor Welsh constituency had been part of the great 1904–1907 revival.⁵⁸⁷ Moreover, as one historian has noted, he “had been brought up by his uncle, who had been a preacher in a fundamentalist Welsh Baptist sect with a tradition of interpreting the Bible quite literally.” As prime minister from 1916–1922, Lloyd George would be a key to British focus on the Middle East.

The increasing familiarity of conflict with Islam was a further barometer of London's thinking. After the 1857 Mutiny in India, as British occupation moved northwest toward the Khyber Pass, the foes were Muslim khans and tribesmen.⁵⁸⁸ The Great Game itself was played in a Muslim arena — Afghanistan, Persia, India's North-West Frontier Province, and Russian central Asia. So, too, for the military expeditions of Generals Kitchener and Gordon in Egypt and the Sudan, as well as the outposts of empire in northern Nigeria, Aden, Zanzibar, British Somaliland, and the Malayan Straits Settlements.⁵⁸⁹ As the Ottoman Empire tottered, Muslim lands became the next arena of European imperial ambition.

Britain's Armageddon rhetoric had a broader origin. In *The Road to Armageddon* Cecil Eby summarized that "increasingly, in England, 'Armageddon' became a popular catchphrase referring to an apocalyptic war that would be fought at some time in the future. Thus, when war finally broke out with Germany in 1914, H.G. Wells' famous phrase, 'the war that will end war,' caught the public fancy because it appeared to fulfill St. John's prophecy of the war between the legions of God and Satan, conveniently defined as England and Germany, respectively."

In later years the war's extensions into the Middle East and reconquest of Jerusalem in 1917, proximate to the old Megiddo battlefield, added force. The poet Rupert Brooke had written in the early days, "Well, if Armageddon's on, I suppose one should be there."⁵⁹⁰ By the time Sir Edmund Allenby took Jerusalem in late-1917, an additional analogy was being superimposed.⁵⁹¹ Major Vivian Gilbert's narrative *The Romance of the Last Crusade: With Allenby to Jerusalem* took its title from Allenby's supposed remark on entering the holy city, "Now the Crusades have ended." On the other hand, when Allenby was advanced to the peerage he became Viscount Allenby of Megiddo and Felixstowe.

The romance of the Crusades was alive and breathing strongly. As French and British imperialism moved into the lands of Islam during the 19th century, both nations turned out books with titles like *The Cross and the Crescent*, and art like Delacroix's painting *The Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople*. When plans to carve up the Middle East took shape during the war, the French evoked the old crusader kingdoms of the 12th and 13th centuries ruled by Frenchmen such as Godfrey de Bouillon. The British, having the legends of Richard the Lionheart but no actual crusader kingdoms to evoke, more or less decided to put their chips on a Jewish Anglo-American client state within the same boundaries.⁵⁹²

In his memoirs Lloyd George recalled being "brought up in a school where I was taught far more about the history of the Jews than about the history of my own land." During the course of the war, he called Britain's role as that of the Good Samaritan and enjoyed discussing the names and places in the holy land. He also provided critical support for a postwar Jewish homeland under British auspices and for the late-1917 British invasion of Palestine.

British policy makers closed out the war in 1918 with a rising conviction that the Middle East was where Britain would find its postwar imperial expansion. German East Africa had been captured, Egypt became a formal British protectorate in 1919, and Persia became an informal one, leaving the holy land — Palestine, Jordan, and Mesopotamia — as the missing link in complete British dominance from Cape Town to Burma. Pushed by Lloyd George, Britain had by the end of 1918 sent 1,084,000 British and Commonwealth troops into Ottoman territory to control the carving up, and the so-called settlement of 1922 fulfilled British ambition.

Nevertheless, by 1922–1923, British policymakers knew that the foundations of these ambitions had col-

lapsed. Many troops had been withdrawn in 1919, and then Britain's economy fell into a deep downturn in 1920 and 1921. Mesopotamia (Iraq) was restive, shrunken budgets forced cutbacks in imperial ambition, and Lloyd George's coalition government was defeated in the 1922 general election. As this took place, Palestine, Jordan, and Iraq became dusty way stations of an empire in decline, not one still cresting toward a greater future. As early as 1919 Britain urged the United States to take up a peacekeeping role in Constantinople and Armenia, but [the US] Congress declined.

Slippage at home was visible in the inability of British churches to command their former respect and Sunday attendance. The Church of England lost public confidence through its thoughtless wartime flag-waving, and the largely evangelical nonconformists lost ground because their war support — many had been caught up in the drumbeat of moral imperialism by 1914 — mocked their earlier peacetime priorities and preoccupation with social progress. Churchgoing lost its quasi-obligatory status for middle- and upper-class Britons, reducing attendance to only 15–20 percent of the population in the 1940s.

How much of this misfortune might repeat in the even more evangelical and morally assured United States during the 21st century can be no more than a matter of speculation. But while the lessons of Rome and Spain are distant and only minimally relevant, that is not true of evangelical, Protestant Britain, marching proudly — and naively — to war under the same hymns still sung at Iowa church suppers. British observers were appalled, in March 2003, to find that George W. Bush had been transporting himself back to the Allenby years through his Oswald Chambers readings. In a column for *The Times of London*, Ben McIntyre regretted that Bush's focus was not “the grimly inspired ironies of Siegfried

Sassoon and Robert Graves, nor the poignant painful questioning of Wilfred Owen.”⁵⁹³ Instead he was absorbed in the 1917 advice of evangelical war chaplain Chambers, whose counsel was to put aside any consideration other than God’s will, to “surrender your will to him absolutely and irrevocably” and “become more and more ablaze for the glory of God.” For Chambers, said *The Times*, “the enemy was ‘evil,’ religious duty was clear, and Christian soldiers marched onwards in a straight line.”

Events in the Middle East had been part of Britain’s post-World War I debacle. Nearly a century later, the error was about to be blindly repeated by a president of the United States who shared Lloyd George’s biblical frame of reference, thought the enemy was “evil,” and failed to profit from the larger lesson taught by history.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, America has taken up the war whoops of militant Protestantism, the evangelical Christian missionary hopes and demands, the heady talk about bringing liberty and freedom to new shores, the tingle of the old Christian-Muslim blood feud, the biblical preoccupation with Israel, and the scenarios of the end times and Armageddon — the whole entrapping drama that played in British political theater a century ago, American evangelical, fundamentalist, and Pentecostal churches, in turn, have become the new flag bearers of crusades against Islam’s “evil ones.” According to national public opinion polls, evangelicals and their leaders far exceed other Americans in their disapproval of Islam. Two-thirds of these leaders consider Islam to be dedicated to “world domination” and a “religion of violence.” The anti-Muslim comments of prominent leaders of the Christian right such as Falwell, Robertson, Franklin Graham, and former Southern Baptist Convention president Jerry Vines confirmed evangelical leader Richard Cizik’s contention about antagonism to Islam replacing hatred of the Soviet Union.

Yet much of their activity purports to be missionary. Instead of British church people and Bible societies accompanying Queen Victoria's soldiers to India, we have US missionaries following the flag to the Middle East. Prior to World War II the mainline US churches led missionary work, but today, says historian Paul Harvey, "American foreign mission efforts are dominated by conservative evangelical groups (the Southern Baptist Convention and the Assemblies of God, the largest Pentecostal denomination, are the two largest senders of career missionaries) and Mormons (by far the largest sender of non-career missionaries). Indeed, after the prophecy wave of the early-1990s the Southern Baptist Convention and other evangelicals reorganized their missionary activity to focus on Islam in the Middle East and North Africa, and in 2003, *The New York Times* reported that the number of US missionaries in Islamic countries had doubled since 1990.

By 2003, after a decade-long drumbeat by religious organizations urging the United States to defend foreign Christian populations — another page taken from British 19th-century experience — the principal evangelical churches were not just war supporters but active mission planners. A year after the military took Baghdad, a survey by the *Los Angeles Times* found 30 evangelical missions in the city. Kyle Fisk, executive administrator of the National Association of Evangelicals, told the newspaper that "Iraq will become the center for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to Iran, Libya, and throughout the Middle East." John Brady, head of operations of the Southern Baptist Convention International Missions Board in the Middle East and North Africa, said in a fundraising letter that events in Iraq represented a "war for souls." Within two years seven new evangelical Christian churches had been launched in Baghdad alone. Some credited their humanitarian efforts, but the Roman Catholic archbishop

claimed they “seduced” Christians from other churches, and some Muslims complained about the proselytization. Whatever the effect, many in the Christian right appear to have a larger purpose, perhaps related to preparation for the rapture, the tribulation, and Armageddon. Some 40 percent of Americans, as we have seen, believe that the antichrist is alive and already on earth.

Paul Boyer [history professor, University of Wisconsin] dates evangelical preoccupation with the Middle East back half a century, stirred by the creation of Israel in 1948, then by the “recapture” of Jerusalem’s Old City in 1967, and then again by the expansion of Jewish settlements [colonies] in Gaza and the West Bank, all key end-times signs. They further ballooned during the years surrounding the Gulf War and the demonizing of Saddam Hussein. Islam’s evil role, says Boyer, is an ancient view in Christian eschatology, “As Richard the Lion-Hearted prepared for the Third Crusade in 1190, the famed prophecy interpreter Joachim of Fiore assured him that the Islamic ruler Saladin [Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī], who held Jerusalem, was the Anti-Christ and that Richard would defeat him and recapture the Holy City.”⁵⁹⁴ Later, even during World War I, the Ottoman Empire was cast in the antichrist role, and by the 1970s fundamentalists were transferring that evil to the Arab world. Boyer adds,

Anticipating George W. Bush, prophecy writers in the late-20th century also quickly zeroed in on Saddam Hussein. If not the Anti-Christ himself, they suggested, Saddam could well be a forerunner of the Evil One... Prophecy believers found particular significance in Saddam’s plan, launched in the 1970s, to rebuild Babylon on its ancient ruins. The fabled city on the Euphrates, south of Baghdad... owed its splendor to King Nebuchadnezzar, the same

wicked king who warred against Israel and destroyed Jerusalem in 586BC.

Evil Babylon, the antithesis of Jerusalem, the good city, prompted its own literature in the 1990s, and LaHaye's tens of millions of readers praised his series as making the Bible and its supposed predictions "come alive." Like Boyer and other critics of LaHaye, I cannot help but think that by the early-2000s — certainly by September 11 — the *Left Behind* series provided an extraordinary context for a president with a religious mission. Its biblical framework already bundled together the terrorism of September 11, the oil politics of the Persian Gulf (oil itself being, in the LaHaye books, a strategic calculus of the antichrist, it could not be a White House focus), and the invasion of Iraq-cum-Babylon. The distinctions that mattered to secular Americans — that Saddam was not involved in the September 11 attacks and that the weapons-of-mass-destruction excuse for invading Iraq was specious — would have mattered less to the tens of millions of true believers viewing events through a *Left Behind* perspective. They simply embraced Bush's broad good-versus-evil explanation.

Ultimately polling projects have suggested that Bush backers were uniquely muddled in their perceptions. One special survey undertaken by the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland found three-quarters of Bush backers still convinced in autumn 2004 that Iraq did have weapons of mass destruction or a development program and was also aiding al-Qaeda, despite well-publicized official reports to the contrary. As part of their worldview, these people simply refused to disbelieve Bush's original weaponry assurances or implications — a case of "cognitive dissonance."

Unfortunately, the international consequences of US misjudgement in the Middle East — from the loss of

American prestige and rising oil prices to occupied Iraq's role in breeding, not relieving, Islamic "terrorism" — could not be so easily ignored. The military casualties and the budgetary deficit effects of the imbroglio in Iraq rose together. And if the disarray was far short of anything in World War I, some of the message was similar. As in Britain nearly a century earlier, evangelical religion, biblically stirred foreign policy, and a crusader mentality ill fitted a great power decreasingly able to bear the rising economic costs of strategic and energy supply failure.

If anything, the United States of the early-2000s, for all that it lacked [in] Britain's established church, was under George W. Bush in the grip of a considerably more powerful religiosity, constituency pressure, and biblical worldview.⁵⁹⁵

This essentially delivers a down-to-earth, hard-nosed, and clear-cut breakdown of the relationship between church and state, or perhaps, the fiction of a separation between church and state. This recapitulation of aspects of Euro-American, religious-cum-political history illustrates how numerous clergymen within Christendom become tools of emperors and imperialist chief executives. These are not the priests and monks alluded to by the Qur'an when it describes those who are overwhelmed by the truth to the point of being moved to tears. Rather these church officials, as identified in the extended citation above, just in the two examples of Britain and America, are obvious stooges of kings and presidents, prime ministers, and "insiders"; that is, they are the ones who provide God's blessing and benediction to agnostic kings and atheistic presidents to conduct "holy" wars of occupation to "civilize" (enslave) the savage (Muslims and other native peoples). The foggy area in the minds of most people, Muslims included, is the relationship between men of God and the truth on one side, and men of power and the "church" on the other side. Distinguishing between the two is a formidable step in the journey to reverse institutional and generational injustice.

Islam and Political Christians: Relationship of Confrontation

The *āyah's* historical and human context, that is, its grounds for revelation, may be based on the following occurrences or characteristics of the particular groups in question. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) sent 'Amr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī with a missive to al-Najāshī (the Negus) of ancient Ethiopia (Abyssinia), who proceeded to examine it closely and then called on Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib and the other Muslim refugees with him to answer some questions. In the presence of his priests and monks, al-Najāshī began his inquiry to which Ja'far responded in part by reciting some *āyāt* from *Sūrah Maryam*. It was on this occasion that al-Najāshī and his people upheld the validity of what they had just heard and expressed their faith in the revealed Qur'an with their eyes full of tears. According to a narrative by Abū Bakr ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān and 'Urwaḥ ibn al-Zubayr, what transpired in this incident represents the description in the *āyah*,⁵⁹⁶

And you will certainly find that, of all people, those who say, "Behold, we are Christians," come closest to feeling affection for those who are committed [to Allah]: this is because there are priests and monks among them, and because these are not given to arrogance.

For, when they come to understand what has been bestowed from on high upon this Apostle, you can see their eyes overflow with tears, because they recognize something of its truth; [and] they say, "O our Sustainer! We do commit [to its truth]; make us one, then, with all who bear witness to the truth (5:82–83).

A second narrative from Islamic historical sources relates that al-Najāshī sent 30 of his select men to the Prophet (ﷺ). And when they heard *Sūrah Yāsīn* being recited, they began to weep, saying, "This is very similar to what Jesus (ﷺ) received from God." Thus, it has been inferred that this *āyah* pertains to them.⁵⁹⁷ Al-Nisā'ī on the authority of 'Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr records that the *āyah* beginning with "For, when they come to understand what has been

bestowed from on high upon this Apostle...” was revealed in relationship to al-Najāshī. Al-Ṭabarānī corroborates the same via ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās.⁵⁹⁸ Ibn ‘Abbās, Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr, ‘Aṭā’, and al-Suddī all say that these *āyāt* refer to al-Najāshī and his people, from whom a select few were sent as emissaries to see the Prophet; it is said that these were the ones who professed their faith in Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ).⁵⁹⁹

Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī takes a more general view, saying that the *āyah* speaks about those Christians who are serious about their Christianity, and that these are the ones whom the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) found to be the closest of all people to the committed Muslims. Though the *āyah* does not point definitively to certain individuals, it could be alluding to any principled Christians who solicit warmth from the committed Muslims. It is possible that al-Najāshī and his flock are included in this more general statement; similarly, other followers of Jesus (ﷺ) who have not exaggerated the meanings of the revelation he was given could also be included in the meanings of this broad *āyah*. So when these Christians hear about and understand the final revelation given to Muhammad (ﷺ) they themselves easily enter into Islam, as they are not under the influence of any egoistic, nationalist, or otherwise prejudicial priorities.

These Christians, who have no selfishness or false pride that stands between them and the truth revealed in this Qur’an, state with humility and modesty, “...place us, then, with all who bear witness to the truth.” This statement has to be placed in the context of the social dynamic it belongs to. The fact of the matter is that committed Muslims bear witness vis-à-vis all other peoples; they are the carriers of the covenant, the God-given truth, and the heavenly trust unto mankind. This position is vital, dynamic, and progressive. It is a status akin to standing on the summit of the highest moral mountain and spurring on those who have yet to climb up to its crest. It is a mental and spiritual achievement that all sincere people yearn and long for. And so it is with these Christians: due to their earnestness and seriousness, they do not want to be left behind, they want to join this testimonial and thus say, “O Allah! Render us among those who testify to Your truth.”

At a good distance from the political shenanigans and opportunism that has punctuated the history of Christendom, such Christians are apt to acquiesce to the truth that is common between the Gospel and the Qur'an. However, there are those other Christians, the wily politicians and foxy financiers who happen to exhibit the opposite behavior, **"...whereas they who are bent on denying the truth [of God, prophets, and scripture] and giving the lie to Our power presence [in human affairs] — they are destined for the blazing fire."**

Thus even though a good number of Christians are positively disposed to Islam, by virtue of this divine guidance, the Muslims cannot afford to be blinded to the bribable and unholy side of Christendom. There are those who are approachable, amenable, and reciprocal with the God-given truth and there are those who are resistant, contrarian, and opposed. The latter are referred to as *kāfirs*. The label *kāfir* is applied to "Jews," "Christians," or even "Muslims" who are in denial and rejection of Allah (ﷻ). Anyone who says that the Qur'an is not true, the Qur'an is false, the Qur'an is fabricated, or the Qur'an in any way is not from Allah (ﷻ) is in flagrant refutation of the truth that forms the architecture of reality and actuality. That is why "Jews" and "Christians" have scarcely, if ever, presented a cogent and logical argument against the contents of this Qur'an. Other *āyāt* in the Qur'an that refer to the renunciation and repudiation (*kufr*) coming out of the Judeo-Christian experience include,

In denial [of Allah] are those who say, "Actually, Allah is one-third of three (5:73);

Condemned are the deniers [of Allah] from the Children of Israel by the articulation of David and Jesus, son of Mary (5:78);

Those who are in denial [of Allah] from people of scripture and the *mushriks* do not become [on occasions] dismissive [of Allah and the truth] until evidence/validation comes to them [from Allah]... (98:1);

Verily, those who [despite all evidence] are bent on denying the truth — [be they] from among the followers of earlier revelation or from among those who ascribe divinity/authority to any beside Allah — will find themselves in the fire of Hell, therein to abide: they are the worst of all creatures (98:6).

The word “*kufri*” is a Qur’anic word; it needs to be cleansed of its Latin and secular mistranslations. It does not mean *heathen*, *infidel*, or *pagan*. According to some definitions a *heathen* is (1) an unconverted individual of a people that do not acknowledge the God of the Bible; (2) an irreligious, uncultured, or uncivilized person; or (3) of or pertaining to heathens; pagan. An *infidel* in Latin and Church definitions is one who is not among the church faithful, that is, one who was never baptized; thus Jews and “Mohammedans” are considered infidels. In a related instance, one who has rejected and repudiated Christianity as a divine revelation, although baptized, is also called an infidel. *Kufri*, though, is an active mental rejection of divine guidance (Islam) once it has been presented, preached, and publicized. In the absence of the presentation of Allah’s (ﷻ) truth there can be no *kufri*, as *kufri*, by definition, requires a mental and attitudinal rejection of His truth and the truth about Him. And therefore, as he better understands the Qur’an, the committed Muslim will recognize that there are Christians who are willing and obliging when it comes to their objective and rational approach to Islam, and equally there are Christians who are disinclined and defiant when it comes to their subjective and emotional approach to Islam. This distinction between Christians should be settled in the minds of thinking and motivated Muslims. The two types of Christians have their respective destinies: one is soothing and pleasing while the other is irritating and aggravating.

Not all people, and not even many people who say they are Christians, are designated by the words “...**closest in feeling affection toward the committed Muslims...**” Our world today is full of petty and confidence-challenged Muslims who want to showcase

their phylogenetic relation with modern “Christians,” so they try to make this *āyah* uber-inclusive as to wrap up all Christians in its meanings. But the context of this *āyah* and many other *āyāt* make it very clear that there are some Christians who fit this description — but that there are many others who do not.

The Qur'an cannot be detached from its own self, that is, people cannot cherry-pick *āyāt* to justify their preconceived arguments. All the verses of the Qur'an have to be considered as part of a whole. So when there are favorable *āyāt* about Christians and unfavorable ones then the committed Muslims are required to understand why the Qur'an carries this seemingly contradictory approach toward “Christians.” Thinking the matter through reveals that the contradiction is not in the Qur'an; rather the contradiction is in the “Christians” themselves. Some of them, it turns out, are sincere while others of them are anything but. Much of this distinction between who is sincere and who is not in the overall spectrum of Christians around has to do, most of the time, with their political power. The *āyāt* in the Qur'an that finger defective Christians should be considered thoroughly in light of today's general confusion about this matter; some of these discerning verses include,

For, never will the [political] Jews be pleased with you [Muhammad], nor yet the [political] Christians, unless you follow their worldview. Say, “Behold, Allah’s guidance is the only true guidance.” And, indeed, if you should follow their errant views after all the knowledge that has come to you, you would have none to protect you from Allah, and none to bring you support (2:120);

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Do not ally yourselves with [political] Jews and [political] Christians; they are allies of each. And whoever [from among the committed Muslims] allies himself with them becomes part of them: for Allah does not guide people of injustice (5:51);

Say, “O followers of the Bible! You have no valid ground for your beliefs unless you [truly] observe the Torah and the Gospel, and all that has been bestowed from on high upon you by your Sustainer!” Yet all that has been bestowed from on high upon you [O Muhammad] by your Sustainer is bound to make many of them yet more stubborn in their overweening arrogance and in their denial of the truth. But sorrow not over people who deny the truth (5:68).

The Qur’an is always ahead of the slick scheming of political Jews (Zionists) and political Christians (imperialists). In 14 centuries, Muslims should have learned plenty from the subversion of scripture by sympathies (that lie with man’s authority) and “science.” The surly public character of political Jews has been on display ever since Islam’s first hours in Madinah; this history of Yahūdī programs, plans, and plots has been an unending sequence of hatred and hubris toward the higher responsibilities of Muslims — especially Islamic self-determination. Today’s political Jews (Zionists) are still pulling the strings of a worldwide campaign against Islamic revival with all the bitterness and antagonism that is humanly possible. Likewise, the contempt and cynicism of political Christians (imperialists) have catalyzed their crusades against the high-spirited Muslims who have been called to the higher responsibilities of the Qur’an. The first serious bloodshed between imperialist Christians and godly Muslims was the Battle of Yarmūk.⁶⁰⁰ This battle was between a militarily “inferior” Muslim force led by Khālid ibn al-Walid and Byzantine troops under the command of their emperor, Heraclius. The conclusive victory of the Islamic forces drove the Byzantines out of Palestine and Syria, and subsequently these territories became Islamic lands between 16AH and 26AH (637–647CE). Al-Quds (Jerusalem) was liberated by the Muslims in 17AH (638CE), one of the most peaceful liberations in the history of that holy city. The following, from Ismā’il al-Fārūqī’s valuable book *Islam and the Problem of Israel*, which should be recommended reading for all thoughtful Muslims, offers a historical overview of Islamic-Christian relations,

Christian commercial interest had pushed Abyssinia into launching a colonialist venture in South Arabia in 560AC and an attempt to destroy the power of Makkah in the “Year of the Elephant,” or 570AC, the year of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Even as early as that time, Western Christendom saw fit to use the religious zeal of Eastern Christians in order to exploit both them and the pre-Islamic Arabs for commercial profit. Pre-Islamic Arabia was a religious vacuum at the time, and the Christians of the West who held the reins of power in their hand were not concerned with preaching the faith. Rather, they were immersed in political struggles on the internal front, and economic and military struggle on the external. Arabia had no significance for them except as a trade route. When the new Islamic state began to raise its head following the integration of Makkah and most of the tribes of Western and South Arabia, Byzantium saw fit to mobilize its puppet armies in South Palestine and Jordan, a move which brought about the first military encounter between Islam and Christendom, the Campaign of Mu'tah (9AH/631AC).

Previously, the Qur'anic revelation had said what it had to say concerning Christian doctrine, and through the personal conduct of the Prophet (ﷺ), the Islamic state had laid down what her relation to Christians would be. The delegation from Christian Najrān was well received by the Prophet (ﷺ) and given full honor and hospitality.⁶⁰¹ They were presented with Islam. Some accepted it and henceforth became integral members of the Muslim *ummaḥ*. Others rejected it, and their decision was respected. They accepted the Pax Islamica and became an autonomous community endowed with its own law and institutions, its own destiny and momentum — an integral part of the universal Islamic state. But Christendom to the north could not countenance such arrangement. That is why when the Prophet (ﷺ) sent two

companions to Dhāt al-Ṭalḥ to preach Islam, they were beheaded, and the confrontation became imminent.

From that time on, the relation between the Islamic state (then till now the Muslim World) and Christendom has been one of confrontations. Periods of relative inactivity on their common frontiers there certainly were. But these were temporary respites, due to the exhaustion of the two parties. In vain did the Muslim World offer Christendom the Pax Islamica dictated by the Islamic state's constitution. Behind the still lines, stood a Christendom frustrated by its temporary inability to subdue the Muslim World. No sooner had Christendom recovered strength than it directed its fury and expansion in the direction of the Muslim World: against the Muslim petty states in Spain, the Ottoman caliphate in East Europe, the Muslims in West Africa, the Indian Ocean, the Malay Basin. The result was colonialism. The Muslim World has seen every kind of it: the European settler type — in Algeria; the intrusion of alien non-Muslim elements into Muslim societies — in Malaysia, Indonesia, Cyprus, Palestine; and economic exploitation, cultural imperialism, church mission, prevention of awakening and growth, spreading discord and *fitnah* (subversion) — everywhere. When the Muslim world arose in armed resistance to this alien and alienating presence in its midst, Christendom only changed its tactics and quickly adapted its means to the new situation. Military occupation and colonial administrations were terminated; but colonialism continued in subtle yet more devastating ways.

The downfall of the Ottoman Empire was received in the Christian West with great jubilation because it marked the end of Muslim hegemony in the world, even in the territory of Islam itself. The peoples of Islam were now to be subject to Christian Western dominion; and their Islamic identity, unity, culture as well as religion must now be confounded and shattered. Only thus may

the general resentment and hatred inherent in the heart of the Christian West be satisfied.⁶⁰²

The politically motivated and controlled crusades within Christendom were a compound of Viking lust for conquest and a penchant to exploit the power of the faith.⁶⁰³ They were also the culmination of a great effort to eradicate war between Christians in Europe. It is noted that the Cluny movement had sought to arrest feudal warfare by the imposition of restraints through the Peace of God and the Truce of God.⁶⁰⁴ The Truce restricted the times for fighting, allowing no hostilities from sunset Wednesday to Monday morning or on holy days, of which there were so many that warfare would have been reduced to a summer sport were the restrictions enforced. The Peace of God restricted the range of the combatants. They could not attack priests, nuns, pilgrims, merchants, or farmers, or their animals, tools, and properties. Princes were called upon to vow to observe the rules, which were not too rigorously phrased. Robert the Pious, for example, swore that he would not attack women traveling without their husbands, unless they were found to be in the wrong. Such concession, however, meant little. Princes took the vows and broke the vows. Then bishops organized armies to punish the oath-breakers, and the Church's armies got out of hand and ravaged the country, so that kings raised armies to suppress the Church's armies.⁶⁰⁵

Then in the year 1095 Pope Urban II, a former monk of Cluny, convoked the Council of Clermont.⁶⁰⁶ The eastern emperor, Alexius I Comnenus, had appealed to the pope for help against the Seljuk Turks, who had recently irrupted into the Levant.⁶⁰⁷ It was a period of unrest and strife within Europe itself. The investiture struggle was still dragging on; but Urban II was on what appeared to be strong ground when he addressed the council in terms reminiscent of the great peace speeches in the councils of the preceding 50 years. Let Christians allay their feuds, he urged. Let them unite. Let them take to heart the atrocities practiced by the accursed Muslims. Let them deliver the holy places from these infidels, and all the assembly cried, "*Dieu le veult*: God wills it."⁶⁰⁸

A new concept of war was involved here. St. Augustine had required that war should be conducted under the auspices of the state. Now it was under the auspices of the Church. Kings, to be sure, took the cross, but at the behest of the pope. According to Augustine the common soldier simply obeyed his prince. Now he volunteered by taking the cross, though, of course, a prince might summon his retainers. The object of the just war, according to Augustine, had been the vindication of justice, meaning primarily the defense of life and property. Now war was for the defense of the faith, or at any rate for the right of the faithful to exercise their faith. The code of the just war called for good faith with the enemy, regard of non-combatants, respect for hostages and prisoners. But all such restraints were abandoned in dealing with the Muslims. The warrant for this view of warfare was found in the biblical account of the conquest of Canaan by Joshua. The Yahūdī connection is rather vivid in the behavior of militant Christians.⁶⁰⁹

The first crusade was primarily French. The Council of Clermont had been attended only by the French, among whom there were four groups of participants: the northern French, under Godfrey and Baldwin of Bouillon; the Provençals, under Raymond of Toulouse and Bishop Adhemar of Puy; the Normans of the North, under Robert of Normandy — the son of the Conqueror — and Robert of Flanders; and the Normans of Sicily, under Bohemund and Tancred. The Provençal group, which included a bishop, chosen as papal representative, was the most loyal to the pope.⁶¹⁰

Urban II's hope would seem to have been that the holy places in Palestine should be delivered from the Muslims and then turned over to the eastern Christian empire, but the crusaders were not so disinterested and soon were at odds with the eastern emperor and with each other. The emperor distrusted them at the outset; this was partly because the Greek and Latin Churches had broken decisively in 1054, when the Orthodox Church sharply rebuffed the demand of the Gregorian reformers that it recognize their claims for the papacy. A deeper reason may have been that these reformers, as some have observed, were northerners from Lorraine who had no sense of belonging to the Mediterranean world and no feeling for

the Byzantine heritage. Another difference between the eastern emperors and the Franks lay in their attitudes toward the Muslims.⁶¹¹ The Byzantines, of course, considered themselves to be the guardians of the true faith. But they had relaxed sufficiently to permit a *masjid* in Constantinople, and they received emissaries from Muslim courts with ceremonial deference. To the easterners the crude zeal of these Franks was obnoxious and the participation of their clergy in fighting was shocking. Their motives also were suspect, for had not the Normans in 1082 tried to capture Durazzo from the Byzantines for no better reason than plunder?⁶¹²

But the emperor could not well turn back the crusaders when they arrived at Constantinople, and they could not go on without him. His solution was to demand oaths of fealty, after the manner of western feudalism. The resistance to taking the oath was most persistent on the part of the Provençals, who thought of themselves as the pope's men. But all, in the end, had to swear in order to secure support. After the host had crossed the Bosphorus an initial victory over the Muslims at Nicaea opened the way through Asia Minor, where the native Christian population regarded the crusaders as liberators.⁶¹³ The war against the Muslims resumed when the Christian forces reached Syria.⁶¹⁴

Then the divergence in aims among the crusaders became apparent. Baldwin, who was supposed to protect the flank, withdrew and ensconced himself in Edessa with every intention of setting up there an independent feudal kingdom.⁶¹⁵ Bohemund and Raymond of Toulouse quarreled as to who should have a kingdom in Antioch.⁶¹⁶ The city resisted siege. Bohemund secured from the allies the promise that if he took Antioch he might keep it. Through a traitor he succeeded, but once inside the city the crusaders in turn were besieged by a newly arrived Muslim-Turkish force. Famine threatened. One of Raymond's men received a "revelation" that the holy lance (spear) that had pierced the side of Christ was buried in Antioch. Excavation produced what appeared to be a lance. The crusaders then, as European history tells it, in joyous confidence, marched out of the city. The Muslims were surprised. Once more the question arose: who should have Antioch? Bohemund claimed

it because he had taken the city; Raymond claimed it because his man had found a way out of it. The solution was to give Bohemund Antioch and Raymond Tripoli.⁶¹⁷ These Christian leaders were more interested in carving kingdoms than in reaching the Holy City (Jerusalem). Only the pressures from the papal party and the common soldiers held the crusaders together until they reached the walls of Jerusalem. The city succumbed in 1099. The crusaders waded to their ankles in the blood of the Muslims, whom they called the infidels, then proceeded to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, singing in jubilation that Christ had conquered. His followers had returned to the city where he had been “crucified.” Now, once more, pilgrims flocked “freely” to the East, and with them came knights and traders, and an increase in contacts between Christendom and the Greeks and between Christendom and the Muslims. Christian Europe had just entered the outside world through its military campaigns and deadly missions.⁶¹⁸

The rapid movement of Islamic power, which occurred within a century after the Prophet (ﷺ) had passed on, divided the Mediterranean world. Europe, which since ancient times had faced toward the East, was now forced to develop its own resources. When the Mediterranean lands of Europe did revive, it was partly because of their contacts with the higher civilization of the Muslims. One factor of their revival was the exquisite flowering of Islamic Spain and the Islamic-Norman island of Sicily.⁶¹⁹ Another was the Crusades’ objective to expel the Muslims from the Holy Land, for which all Europe had to unite; they originated in France and, in the words of the princess Anna Comnena — an apprehensive Byzantine historian who witnessed them — aroused “all the West and all the barbarian tribes from beyond the Adriatic” to move “in a body through Europe toward Asia.”⁶²⁰

The Crusades were to have an enormous effect on the West, although little of it resulted directly from contacts between the crusaders and the Muslims in the Holy Land. A new concept of taxation was born when personal property was taxed to raise money for the Christian campaigns. Western European scholars benefitted from increased contact with Byzantium. The Crusades unleashed a

current of geographic expeditions that were to culminate in the “discovery” of America and the circumnavigation of the globe. The Crusades promoted the prosperity of the Italian trading towns, which were to grow rich providing transportation for crusaders to the Holy Land; their wealth in turn played a significant role in the dawn of the Italian Renaissance. Indeed, the Crusades, and other encounters with the Islamic world, were a result and then a further cause of Europe’s turning outward during its later Middle Ages. Born of a holy cause and fought by consecrated warriors, they nevertheless helped to bring into focus the interplay between the Church and the military throughout Europe. If anything, the Crusades stand as a glaring example of religion being subservient to politics, or a Church being used by the state, or at least colluding with it at the highest levels. In other words, the Crusades — a historical precedent of colonialism and imperialism — represent a militarization of the Church or a Christianization of wars of aggression or how easily people in the cloth can become people under arms and invade other peoples lands, massacre innocent populations, and destabilize a holy part of the world for generations and generations.⁶²¹

Promising his audience remission of their sins and “imperishable glory” in heaven, Pope Urban II in 1095 appealed to them to “enter upon the road to the Holy Sepulcher.” More than 60,000 heeded him, and marched and fought across Europe and Asia Minor (Turkey) to the Holy Land (Palestine). The more sophisticated followed military leaders; others were led by Christian preachers like the Frenchman Peter the Hermit, who failed to save them from starvation or massacre along the way. Some even went off behind a goose that they imagined to be inspired by God. A few years after Urban II’s speech there were 12,000 men besieging Jerusalem. At first they were unsuccessful, because, as one of them discovered in a dream, they fought to satisfy personal ambition. In repentance, they fasted and marched barefoot around the city, as its inhabitants stood flouting them. Within nine days, though, the city of Jerusalem fell to the Christian invaders. Jerusalem was taken and its Muslim inhabitants massacred. The crusader kingdom they established there was to last for a century.⁶²²

Nearly a century after the European Christians occupied Jerusalem Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī liberated it. The news of his success stunned the Christian West, and three rulers — the kings of France and England and the Holy Roman emperor — vowed to re-occupy the city. None of these Christian warrior kings succeeded. Richard the Lionheart of England came closest, and although he even suggested marrying his sister to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's brother and giving the pair Jerusalem as a dowry, neither his friendship nor his battles with the Islamic forces and leadership had much practical result. The early Christian crusaders, for all their selfishness and squabbling, had what appears to be profound religious devotion.⁶²³

Their successors often were driven by more ignoble motives. As part of their payment for transportation to the Holy Land, Venice exacted from the knights of the Fourth Crusade the task of conquering her commercial rival, the Christian city of Zara (Zadar). After that had been accomplished the knights went on to sack Constantinople and in 1204 set up a Latin Kingdom there; they never got to the Holy Land at all. The Sixth Crusade, led by the emperor Frederick II in 1228, was a mockery; Frederick went through the motions of taking Jerusalem, but he established a truce with the Islamic forces that allowed the latter to resume their control. The Seventh Crusade, led by Saint Louis IX, king of France, was even less successful; the crusaders never got closer to the Holy Land than Egypt. When Louis decided to embark on yet another crusade, he diverted it to Tunis, ostensibly to subdue that land for Christianity, but more probably to conquer it for his brother, the king of Sicily. By 1291 the last crusader fortress had fallen to Muslim powers. As late as the 15th century, however, Christians still dreamed of occupying Jerusalem. And the politics of today's Zionist occupation of that same Holy Land indicates that Western Christendom still cannot live with the fact that the Holy Land belongs to its occupants, the overwhelming majority of them being Muslims!⁶²⁴

Muslims should not have a short memory. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims were killed by this Euro-crusading cabal for no scriptural reason or justification. Two hundred years of genocidal warfare against the Muslims should not go down a memory black

hole. People who forget aggression and occupation are unknowingly making themselves fodder for more aggression and occupation. But the Crusades were only the beginning of Euro-Christendom's sordid history. Another notorious chapter in that history details the depredations of imperialist Christendom against the Muslims in al-Andalus (Iberia). And new chapters are still being written. Despite all of their holier-than-thou rhetoric to the contrary, it is the genocide of Muslims that attests to a mind and a life without scripture. Their shady and dirty policies live on in the form of colonialism, imperialism, globalization, a new world order, and whatever post-contemporary policies that are yet to appear through the agency of cannons of death and missiles of destruction.

The Zionist and imperialist forces illustrate the validity and truth of these incontrovertible *āyāt*. The alliance between them is stronger than any naive Muslim may believe. All efforts today by lobbying Muslims in the West to have a foothold in this alliance make fools out of such individuals and organizations. Even with all the gall and resentment between Zionism and imperialism, they still find enough common ground to close ranks and role out their militaries against Muslims almost everywhere, at one time or another, from ancient Africa to modern Makkah. Their warfare has stood the test of time and the *āyah* describes them better than any twisted thoughts or rationalizing logic, “...they [Zionists and imperialists] are allies of each other...” (5:51). It is this satanic alliance that brought down the last vestige of central Muslim power represented by the Ottoman Sultanate. From there (1924) on it has been all downhill, with Zionists and imperialists dismantling Islamic self-determination through their secular, step-by-step approach. Zionism hand-in-hand with imperialism disestablished Islamic governance and then proceeded to thwart any Islamic form of economic and social solidarity.

As this alliance of the atrocious was trying to finish off Islam even in its personal expressions (all types of assaults on men wearing beards and women wearing *hijāb*, etc.), it was to be dealt an unexpected blow with the resurgence of an Islamic revolution in the land of Iran, along with a growing tempo of a worldwide Islamic

movement that, for them, came out of the blue. Now this Zionist-imperialist duo is looking for ex-communist, current atheist, and hard-core secularists to form an international barrier between Muslims on the one hand, who want to be all they can be in their own homes and countries, and the rest of the world on the other. The Zionist-imperialist collaborative is working overtime through bilateral and multilateral channels, it is using international organizations and forums, it is moving through the United Nations and its offshoots, and it is utilizing every possible conduit to fire words and launch weapons against an ongoing movement for Islamic self-determination. The worst part of all this is the penetration of the Zionist-imperialist contagion into the elites of Muslim countries as it makes heroes, who appear to be fighting external enemies, out of stooges posturing to wage a relentless campaign and a vicious war against their “cultural” own who are standing up and passing on for the cause of Allah (ﷻ).

All Muslims are called upon to learn from the Qur’an as a whole and from these *āyāt* in particular lest they confuse Christians and Jews under the spell of Zionist-imperialist executors with those principled ones who are against Zionism and imperialism. The Muslims can no longer afford to permit their own to sneak into this Zionist-imperialist alliance, and then pretend that they — as kings, presidents, or other types of executives — are still committed Muslims. Such groveling and cringing on the one hand and detachment from it on the other has been going on for too long and it has to stop — yesterday before today, and now before tomorrow.

Fourteen full centuries are solid proof of what these *āyāt* are saying. The Muslims of today cannot dump these centuries of experience and rivers of innocent Muslim blood into a wishful thinking that equates all Jews and Christians with all Muslims. Then where did Zionism and imperialism come from? How have they survived? And why are they active today with plans of ethnic cleansing, population transfer, and brutal wars against Muslims and oppressed people around the world?

The Muslims, in the US and Europe in particular, and elsewhere around the world, have had over 30 years of “Islamic” strate-

gizing, programs, conferences, and expectations built on the false assumption that across-the-board Christians are better than across-the-board Jews. Though this may be true in a general sense, it fails to account for much of the critical thinking coming out of these *āyāt*, this *sūrah*, and the other *āyāt* and *sūrah*s in the Qur'an that open the Muslims' eyes and fix their attention on the wide range of "Christians" they have to deal with at all levels of life. And when it comes to the political dimension, the unmistakable conclusion is that Christians who are officials, diplomats, and representatives of states are in cahoots with the Zionists. The jerry-built, namby-pamby, and wishy-washy "Islamists" — who chose to be baited by their Saudi connections and in turn are the halfwit whipping boys of the imperialist-Zionist cabal — deserve all the opprobrium and infamy from all decent Muslims and oppressed people at every "here and there" in the world. This connection between the wealth of ersatz-American ruling families in Arabia and "Islamists" has not served the Islamic movement in any positive and momentous way. The only service it has offered is the trail of deadly errors it has to its credit, from which the newer, more principled, generations of Muslims will learn not to be thankful for backseat accommodations in the overall scheme of Zionist-imperialist priorities.

The scariest nightmare for Zionists and imperialists involves Muslims, even as their numbers are few and far between, finally realizing they need to close ranks and, by Islamic self-determination, roll back the aggression and occupation that came from a long Muslim failure to be present. Every Zionist, imperialist, or "Islamist" organization that tries to hinder or otherwise extinguish this level of awareness becomes the sworn enemy of Allah (ﷻ), His Prophet (ﷺ), and the committed and coping Muslims. Is it any wonder that Zionist headhunters and imperialist lookout men are combing the Ummah for "moderate" Muslims? The search is on: spineless and gutless Muslims are in high demand! Governmental departments, intelligence agencies, academic institutions, and military branches have gone all out looking for Muslims who cannot or will not carry these Qur'anic meanings in their lives and live by these standards until they meet their Creator.

No part of the Qur'an contradicts another part. This Qur'an shows us the way forward and spares us the agony of the types of serious mistakes that have been forcibly thrust into our lives by the Zionist-imperialist camarilla. It behooves us to not only read and understand it, but also to circulate its meanings, standardize its principles, and socialize its values. Otherwise, the Qur'an will just be a book that decorates a bookshelf or a cosmetic book in an elaborate library.

The Moral and Legal Complement That Is Islam

Sūrah al-Mā'idah commenced with *āyāt* pertaining to the lawful and unlawful and to the statutory and unsanctioned — to how a Muslim conscience can work its way through its human relationship with Allah (ﷻ). Part of what was made lawful for committed Muslims, and hence became well-grounded in scripture, is the food of people of previous scripture as well as moral spouses therefrom. Issues pertaining to *tahārah* (ritual cleanliness) were outlined as a preparatory step to communion with the Most High. And finally, all of the above was meant to nurture a human conscience that could handle the imperative of impartial, dispassionate, and non-partisan justice, even in the case of vicious and visceral enemies.

The second third of the *sūrah* begins by asserting that authority is the central feature of divinity, or in other words, that divinity is meaningless without authority. This dovetailed with the awareness that, in a harmonious society, morality and legality go hand in hand, as legality is the socialization of morals and morality is the personalization of laws, and that God's domain is not restricted to personal moral refinement. He, in fact, is the Lawgiver and has not licensed man to create a legal system that runs counter to the divine moral code. The *sūrah* goes on to show that, in trying to delegitimize God's morals, and thereby His role as the sole executor of human affairs, political Jews and political Christians have exploited this very space by rewriting scripture "in their own image" as it were. And so the *āyāt* of *Sūrah al-Mā'idah* painstakingly alert the committed Muslims to the impossibility of such Jews and Christians (today's Zionists and imperialists) being the former's allies, sponsors, or confidants. Not only are they a world apart from principled Jews and theological Christians, who would most certainly recognize the Qur'an as the continuation of the divine word as it confirms and corroborates their own scriptures, but they in fact only share common cause with aggressive *mushriks* and contentious *kāfirs*.

And now this concluding third of *Sūrah al-Mā'idah* traverses another lengthy exposé concerning the people of previous scripture and the proper Islamic position toward them — in dialogue and in

deed. There is a synergy between the discourse here (*āyāt* 5:87–108) and the opening *āyāt* of the *sūrah*. Anyone who pays close attention to the construct of the verses within their “lesson structure” will notice an interaction between verses that lend themselves to a moral objective and others that are tethered to a legal objective. This appears to be intentional as, by necessity, there is an interplay between man’s conscience and man’s mind, neither of which can endure the kind of strict separation characteristic of secular man’s ruminations and presentations about himself. This is another way in which the holy Text contributes to the integrity and consolidation of the human entity and the human effort. This is not a book of extensive legalisms devoid of spirit, nor is it a book of ascetic spirituality that leaves the civic legal construct to atheistic pharaohs, agnostic caesars, secular presidents, and sacrilegious prime ministers. This is a Book that narrows the distance between morality and legality in proportion to human adherence to its guidance.

- (5:87) O you who are committed to Allah! Do not deprive yourselves of the good things of life that Allah has made lawful to you, but do not transgress the bounds of what is right: verily, Allah does not love those who transgress the bounds of what is right.
- (5:88) Thus, partake of the lawful, good things that Allah grants you as sustenance, and be conscious of Allah [His power presence and corrective justice], to whom you are committed.
- (5:89) Allah will not take you to task for oaths you may have uttered without thought, but He will take you to task for oaths you have sworn in earnest. Thus, the breaking of an oath must be atoned for by feeding ten needy persons with more or less the same food as you are wont to give to your own families, or by clothing them, or by freeing a human being from bondage; and he who does not have the wherewithal shall fast for three days [instead]. This shall be the atonement for your oaths whenever you have sworn [and broken them]. But be mindful of your oaths! In this way,

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تُحَرِّمُوا طَيِّبَاتِ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا
 وَأَتَقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَنْتُمْ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي
 أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا عَقَّدْتُمُ الْأَيْمَانَ فَكَفَرْتُمْ بِهِ إِطْعَامُ
 عَشْرَةِ مَسْكِينٍ مِنْ أَوْسَطِ مَا تُطْعَمُونَ أَهْلِيكُمْ أَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ أَوْ تَحْرِيرُ
 رَقَبَةٍ ۖ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ ۚ ذَلِكَ كَفْرَةٌ أَيْمَانِكُمْ إِذَا
 حَلَفْتُمْ ۗ وَاحْفَظُوا أَيْمَانَكُمْ ۚ كَذَلِكَ يَبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ءَايَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ
 تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾ يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ
 رِجْسٌ مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ
 الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ
 عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ ۖ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْهَوُونَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا
 الرَّسُولَ وَأَحْذَرُوا فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا عَلَي رَسُولُنَا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ
 ﴿٩٢﴾ لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا طَعِمُوا إِذَا
 مَا اتَّقَوْا وَءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَءَامَنُوا ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَأَحْسَنُوا
 وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾ يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لِيَبْلُوكُمْ اللَّهُ بَشَىءٍ مِّن

الصَّيْدِ تَنَالَهُ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَرِمَاحُكُمْ لِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَخَافُهُ بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ فَمَنِ اعْتَدَىٰ
 بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٤﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَقْتُلُوا الصَّيْدَ وَأَنْتُمْ
 حُرْمٌ وَمَنْ قَتَلَهُ مِنْكُمْ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاءٌ مِّثْلُ مَا قَتَلَ مِنَ النَّعَمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهِ ذَوَا
 عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ هَدِيًّا بَلِغَ الْكَعْبَةَ أَوْ كَفَرَةً طَعَامًا مَسْكِينًا أَوْ عَدْلٌ ذَلِكَ
 صِيَامًا لِيَذُوقَ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِ ۗ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَمَّا سَلَفَ ۚ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَيَنْقُتْهُ اللَّهُ مِنْهُ
 وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٩٥﴾ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ وَطَعَامُهُ، مَتَاعًا لَّكُمْ
 وَلِلسَّيَّارَةِ وَحُرْمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَرِّ مَا دُمْتُمْ حُرْمًا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي
 إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيَمًا لِلنَّاسِ
 وَالشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَالْهَدْيَ وَالْقَلَائِدَ ۚ ذَلِكَ لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي
 السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٧﴾ اَعْلَمُوا
 أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٩٨﴾ مَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ
 إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾ قُلْ لَا يَسْتَوِي
 الْخَبِيثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الْخَبِيثِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَكُونُ لَكُمْ
 الْأَلْبَابُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَسْأَلُوا
 عَنَ أَشْيَاءَ إِن بُدَّ لَكُمْ تَسْؤُكُمْ وَإِن تَسْأَلُوا عَنْهَا حِينَ يُنزَلُ الْقُرْءَانُ

تُبَدَّ لَكُمْ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهَا وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ قَدْ سَأَلَهَا قَوْمٌ مِّنْ
قَبْلِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَصْبَحُوا بِهَا كَافِرِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ بُحَيْرَةٍ وَلَا
سَائِبَةٍ وَلَا وَصِيلَةٍ وَلَا حَامٍ وَلَٰكِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ
وَكَثُرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَىٰ
الرَّسُولِ قَالُوا حَسْبُنَا مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ ءَابَاءَنَا ؕ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ ءَابَاؤُهُمْ لَا
يَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ ۗ لَا
يُضُرُّكُمْ مِّنْ ضَلٍّ إِذَا أَهْتَدَيْتُمْ ۗ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرَجِعُكُمْ ۗ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا
كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا شَهَادَةٌ بَيْنَكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ
الْمَوْتُ حِينَ الْوَصِيَّةِ أَشَانِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ أَوْ ءَاخِرَانِ مِّنْ غَيْرِكُمْ ۖ إِنَّ
أَنْتُمْ ضَرِبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَأَصَابَتْكُمْ مُّصِيبَةُ الْمَوْتِ تَحْسِبُوهُمَا مِ
نْ بَعْدِ الصَّلَاةِ فَيُقْسِمَانِ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ آرْتَبْتُمْ ۖ لَآ نَشْتَرِي بِهِ ثَمَنًا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا
قُرْبَىٰ ۗ وَلَا نَكْتُمُ شَهَادَةَ اللَّهِ إِنَّا إِذًا لَّمِنَ الْآثِمِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ فَإِنْ عُثِرَ عَلَىٰ
أَنَّهُمَا اسْتَحَقَّا إِثْمًا فَآخِرَانِ يُقِيمَانِ مَقَامَهُمَا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَحَقَّ
عَلَيْهِمُ الْأُولَىٰ ۗ فَيُقْسِمَانِ بِاللَّهِ لَشَهَدْنَا أَحَقَّ مِن شَهَدَتَيْهِمَا وَمَا
أَعْتَدَيْنَا إِنَّا إِذًا لَّمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ ذَلِكَ آدَتِي أَن يَأْتُوا بِالشَّهَادَةِ عَلَيَّ

وَجْهَهَا أَوْ يَخَافُوا أَنْ تُرَدَّ أَيْمَانُهُمْ بَعْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ فَتَنْفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَأَسْمَعُوا وَاللَّهُ لَا

يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

Allah makes clear to you His messages, so that you might have cause to be grateful.

- (5:90) O you who are committed [to Allah]! Intoxicants, and games of chance, and idolatrous practices, and the divining of the future are but a loathsome evil of Satan's doing: shun it, then, so that you might attain to a happy state!
- (5:91) By means of intoxicants and games of chance Satan seeks only to sow enmity and hatred among you, and to turn you away from the remembrance of Allah and from *ṣalāh*. Will you not, then, desist?
- (5:92) Hence, pay heed unto Allah, and pay heed unto the Apostle, and be ever on your guard [against evil]; and if you turn away, then know that Our Apostle's only duty is a clear delivery of the message [entrusted to him].
- (5:93) Those who are committed [to Allah] and do righteous deeds incur no sin by partaking of whatever they may, so long as they are conscious of Allah and [truly] commit [to Him] and do righteous deeds, and continue to be observant of Allah and to commit to Him, and grow ever more conscious of Allah [and His power presence], and persevere in doing what is better: for Allah loves the doers of good.
- (5:94) O you who are committed [to Allah]! Most certainly Allah will try you by means of the game [animals] that may come within the reach of your hands and your weapons [while you are on pilgrimage], so that Allah might mark out those who fear Him, although He is beyond the reach of human perception. And as for him who, after all this, transgresses the bounds of what is right — grievous suffering awaits him!

- (5:95) O you who are committed [to Allah]! Kill no game [animals] while you are in the state of pilgrimage. And whoever of you kills it intentionally, [shall make] amends in cattle equivalent to what he has killed — with two persons of probity giving their judgement thereon — to be brought as an offering to the Ka'bah; or else he may atone for his sin by feeding the needy, or by the equivalent thereof in fasting: [this], in order that he taste the full gravity of his deed, [while] Allah shall have effaced the past. But whoever does it again, Allah will inflict His retribution on him: for Allah is almighty, an avenger of evil.
- (5:96) Lawful to you is all water-game, and what the sea brings forth, as a provision for you [who are settled] as well as for travelers, although you are forbidden to hunt on land while you are in the state of pilgrimage. And be conscious of Allah [His power presence], unto whom you shall be gathered.
- (5:97) Allah has laid down that the Ka'bah, the Inviolable Temple, shall be a symbol for all mankind; and [so, too,] the sacred month [of pilgrimage] and the garlanded offerings [are symbols] meant to make you aware that Allah is aware of all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth, and that Allah has full knowledge of everything.
- (5:98) Know that Allah is severe in retribution — and that Allah is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.
- (5:99) No more is the Apostle bound to do than deliver the message [entrusted to him]: and Allah knows all that you do openly, and all that you would conceal.
- (5:100) Say, "There is no comparison between the bad things and the good things, even though very many of the bad things may please you greatly. Be, then, conscious of Allah [and His power], O you who are endowed with insight, so that you might attain to a happy state!"
- (5:101) O you who are committed [to Allah]! Do not ask about matters that, if they were to be made manifest to you [in terms of law], might cause you hardship; for, if you should ask about them while the Qur'an is being revealed,

they might [indeed] be made manifest to you [as laws]. Allah has absolved [you from any obligation] in this respect: for Allah is much-forgiving, forbearing.

- (5:102) People before your time have indeed asked such questions, and in result thereof have come to deny the truth [pertaining to Allah].
- (5:103) It is not of Allah's ordaining that certain kinds of cattle should be marked out by superstition and set aside from the use of man; yet those who are bent on denying the truth attribute their own lying inventions to Allah. And most of them never use their reason:
- (5:104) For when they are told, "Come unto that which Allah has bestowed from on high, and unto the Apostle," they answer, "Enough for us is that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing." Why, even though their forefathers knew nothing, and were devoid of all guidance?
- (5:105) O you who are committed [to Allah]! It is [but] for your own selves that you are responsible: those who go astray can do you no harm if you [yourselves] are on the right path. Unto Allah you all must return: and then He will make you [truly] understand all that you were doing [in life].
- (5:106) O you who are committed [to Allah]! Let there be witnesses to what you do when death approaches you and you are about to make bequests: two persons of probity from among your own people, or — if the pangs of death come upon you while you are traveling far from home — two other persons from [among people] other than your own. Take hold of the two after having prayed; and if you have any doubt in your mind, let each of them swear by Allah, "We shall not sell this [our word] for any price, even though it were [for the sake of] a near kinsman; and neither shall we conceal any of what we have witnessed before Allah — or else, may we indeed be counted among the sinful."
- (5:107) But if afterwards it should come to light that the two [witnesses] have become guilty of [this very] sin, then two others — from among those whom the two former have

deprived of their right — shall take their place and shall swear by Allah, “Our testimony is indeed truer than the testimony of these two, and we have not transgressed the bounds of what is right — or else, may we indeed be counted among the evildoers!”

- (5:108) Thus it will be more likely that people will offer testimony in accordance with the truth — or else they will [have cause to] fear that their oaths will be refuted by the oaths of others. Be, then, conscious of Allah [His power presence], and hearken [unto Him]: for Allah does not bestow His guidance upon iniquitous folk (al-Mā'idah:87–108).

The Qur'an's *āyah* 5:82 distinguishes between the people of previous scripture, talking about the Yahūd as implacable enemies while applauding the attitude of certain Christians, “...and you will surely find that, of all people, they who say, ‘Behold, we are Christians,’ come closest to feeling affection for those who are committed [to Allah]: this is so because there are priests and monks among them...” What might occur to some Muslims reading this is that priests and monks may be doing something admirable, which ought to be emulated by Muslim scripture-bearers. And in this regard, they would be referring to the self-denial, chastity, and asceticism practiced by the Christian clergy as a form of self-discipline in preparation for communion with God. This flawed interpretation by some Muslims thinking outside the lines, so to speak, may lead to exaggerated tendencies that bar the safe and sound pleasures of life, especially as they pertain to man's desire for food and sexual gratification. A temporary or perpetual prohibition, as a matter of principle, of such permissible pleasures has not received the slightest measure of divine approval; hence, “O you who are committed [to Allah]! Do not prohibit the goods of life that Allah has made lawful to you and do not breach [His rules]...”

This sets the record straight on how far one can go in denying himself, as a practice sustained by principle, life's God-given and God-endorsed pleasures. This *āyah* is to be found in the maze of human behavioral extremes: self-indulgence and the desire to

satisfy every carnal and lustful pulse on one end and self-denial to the point of rejecting everything in life that fulfills good taste and sound judgement per God's orders on the other end. No one can inch his way toward God by turning away from the healthful, the nutritious, and the wholesome provisions that God has given to man. Any behavior that emphasizes either of these two extremes — the seeking of sensual pleasure as opposed to the denial of it — has overstepped the mean of moderation into the area of saturation or deprivation. And this digression is bound to be attended by its physical, psychological, and social ramifications.

Christian Extremist Asceticism: Not for Muslims

Asceticism is a variety of austere practices involving the renunciation or denial of ordinary bodily and sensual gratifications. These may include a human definition for fasting, extraordinary meditation, an extreme life of solitude, an inordinate renunciation of possessions, total denial of sexual enjoyment, and, in the extreme, the mortification of the flesh. This type of lifestyle diverts its devotee from the higher purposes and broader responsibilities of life. Therefore, to forestall these matters of human choice that may lead to personal and social dysfunction, to relieve the Muslims of all the attitudes and perceptions that accompany extremism, the Qur'an advises moderation, **"...and eat and drink but do not be excessive"** (7:31). Sensible people with alert minds would abhor any habit or regimen that falls short of or goes beyond the alimentary, robust, and customized provisions of Allah (ﷻ). Any step outside of this healthy circle of choices pertaining to appetite becomes an act of trespassing Allah's (ﷻ) boundaries for the abyss of abhorrent behavior, **"Verily, Allah does not love those who go past the bounds of what is right and divine."**

In order to appreciate what the Qur'an, Allah's (ﷻ) final word, says on this subject, the history and practice of asceticism will have to be examined in some detail. The term *asceticism* is derived from the Greek word *askesis*, meaning *training* or *exercise*. Ascetic practices are found to one degree or another in all major religious

traditions but have been more pronounced in Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and certain forms of Buddhism than in Judaism, Confucianism, or Taoism. The ascetic practices of other religious and quasi-religious groups, including the Essenes, Stoics, Gnostics, Pythagoreans, and Manichaeans, have exerted influence on the development of Christian ascetic ideals.⁶²⁵ The prevalence of asceticism within a given tradition is often said to correlate with its “world-rejecting” tendencies, though the term *world rejection* has been applied so capriciously and tendentiously as to be rendered vacuous. It may be that the psychological origin of ascetic practice is the practical observation that an alteration of physical conditions produces a changed condition of the psyche. The specific practices associated with asceticism are wide and varied and include sexual abstinence, fasting, meditation, contemplation, solitude, voluntary poverty, and the practice of obedience. The intended aftereffects of ascetic practice are equally numerous and include intellectual acuity, moral regeneration, spiritual transformation, empowerment of the self in the service of God and neighbor, atonement for sin, the attainment of religious merit, and the propitiation (atonement) of the divine.⁶²⁶

Biblical warrants for Christian asceticism and austerity are plentiful. St. Paul’s letters in particular are replete with images of the “spiritual athlete,”

Have nothing to do with godless and silly myths. Train yourself in godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come (1 Timothy, 4:7–8);

Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable (1 Corinthians, 9:24–25).

The gospels tend to place less stress than the Pauline letters on spiritual athleticism and more on the inevitability of self-sacrifice and suffering for those who choose to be disciples of Jesus (✠),

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you” (John, 15:18);

“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mark, 8:34; compare with Luke, 9:23 and Matthew, 16:24).

The New Testament, however, can also be construed as cautioning against excessive attachment to ascetic ideals,

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon”; the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, “Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!” (Matthew, 11: 18–19).⁶²⁷

The origin of the systematic practice of asceticism within Christianity is contemporaneous with the birth of monasticism in the 4th century. It was then that Anthony and other anchorites (people retired from society for religious reasons) took to the Egyptian desert in reaction to the increasingly triumphal and “established” character of Christianity in the wake of the conversion of Constantine in 312CE.⁶²⁸ In monastic asceticism, the ideal of martyrdom, so dominant in the first three centuries of Christian history, was reaffirmed in sublimated form: dying to the “world” and the ways of the old self. A pre-monastic “free-form” asceticism practiced by small groups of men and women within village society preceded, and for a time coexisted with, the solitary practice of the anchorites of the Egyptian desert. Both styles of ascetic practice eventually gave way to more highly organized ascetic communities, or *coenobia*. Developments in cenobitic asceticism, most particularly those associated with the Rule of St. Benedict in the 6th century

and with the later appearance of Cistercian, Carthusian, Franciscan, and Dominican spiritualities, were of profound significance in the formation of Christian ascetic practice.⁶²⁹ The importance of theologians such as Clement of Alexandria (3rd century), Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (4th century) and, most notably, St. Augustine of Hippo (4th century) in shaping Christian ascetic practice derives in part from the influence of their theologies upon monastic practice.⁶³⁰

Though the spirituality of many lay Christians in late medieval Europe was shaped by monastic asceticism, manuals of devotion such as Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ* (15th century), St. Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life* (17th century) and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (17th century) became increasingly influential. These manuals often communicated harsh spiritual judgements regarding the relative worth of the body, of human relationships, and of creation in general.⁶³¹

Another and equally important non-monastic influence upon the development of Christian asceticism is the emergence of "inner-worldly" ascetic practices. In Roman Catholicism, the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola inspired an ascetic ethos of unparalleled Western worldly efficacy that thrust the members of the Society of Jesus into a leading role in the Counter-Reformation.⁶³² Perhaps even more significant is the emergence of the "Protestant work ethic," the Calvinist ascetic ethos that Max Weber argues to have been of unique importance in the shaping of modern-day Western culture. According to Weber, the necessity of reconciling articles of faith promulgated in the Westminster Confession, especially the troublesome doctrine of predestination, with the spiritual needs of the believer resulted in a pastoral strategy counseling the active repression of thoughts concerning one's ultimate fate and enjoining the believer to embrace intense worldly activity in God's service. Though succeeding in affirming vocational responsibility for the created world absent in earlier "world-rejecting" ascetic practices, the resultant ethos tended to harbor antipathy toward the mystical elements of earlier ascetic ideals and toward emotionality and passion in general.⁶³³

Nearly a hundred years ago it was noted that “healthy-minded” liberal Protestant and agnostic contemporaries understood asceticism to refer to the activity of embracing “mortification for mortification’s sake” and therefore judged this practice “repugnant.” Echoing this same sentiment a century later, some may say that “asceticism is one of the currently least understood and most universally rejected features of historical Christianity.” But it may be the playful identification of puritanism with “the haunting fear that someone, somewhere may be happy” that probably best captures the modern disdain for things ascetical.⁶³⁴

Though it is never easy to chart the complex interaction between ideas and the cultural matrices that spawn them, it may be safe to say that the writings of Nietzsche and Freud both reflect and inform modern and contemporary suspicions regarding ascetic practice.⁶³⁵ For Nietzsche, asceticism signifies, among other things, the “hatred of humanity, of animality, of inert matter; this loathing of the senses...; this fear of beauty and happiness.”⁶³⁶ His observation that human aggression and anger previously directed outward had, under the tutelage of the “ascetic priest,” turned inward, reducing the self to “a wild beast hurtling against its cage,” anticipated and probably influenced later psychoanalytic insights on the interrelations between guilt, alienation, and the internalization of cultural norms.⁶³⁷ But it was Freud’s notions of the individual and cultural superego functions, and his ingenious and pioneering work in devising therapeutic techniques to mute harsher elements of these, that proved an indispensable prod to the emergence of a countervailing ethos that challenged the ascendant ascetic ethos.⁶³⁸ The new ethos, described by at least one social science theorist as “the triumph of the therapeutic,” and more judgementally by others as “the culture of narcissism,” is one in which the maintenance of a sense of well-being takes precedence over social and religious commitments that might disrupt the individual’s equanimity with guilt-provoking demands. A review of popular literature and attention to the use of therapeutic vocabulary in everyday conversation suggest the widespread influence of the therapeutic ethos in Euro-American culture as well as its antipathy to ascetic ideals of human conduct.⁶³⁹

Ironically, the once subversive exercise in the “hermeneutics of suspicion” associated with the names of Nietzsche and Freud has become sufficiently commonplace that contemporary defenders of ascetic ideals and practices are able to assimilate such criticisms as a matter of course. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, for instance, readily admits, “What used to be accepted values of asceticism do not readily harmonize with mid-20th-century knowledge of man or God.”⁶⁴⁰ William James, asceticism’s earliest champion following the Nietzschean onslaught, distinguished three distinct pathological motives for asceticism — obsessive guilt, pessimistic feelings about the self, and genuine perversions of bodily sensibility — before setting about the task of defending ascetic practice.⁶⁴¹ And Margaret Miles, though also recommending a new form of ascetic practice, judges it best, in the light of traditional asceticism’s disparagement of the body and its legitimation of the marginal status of women, to jettison the term in favor of “Christian practice.”⁶⁴²

It is worth noting that many of the more cogent arguments for a critical retrieval of ascetic practice are tied to radical social criticism. Turning to James and Miles again, a strong suspicion of American materialism is to be noted in both cases. For James, who proposes a return to the ascetic ideal of voluntary poverty, the fevered chase after wealth and the exaggerated fear of impoverishment are the most pervasive and powerful inhibitions to moral discernment and compassion. Miles shares James’ concern, but broadens his social critique to include suspicion of culturally prescribed strategies for constructing self-esteem and recognition of the “deadness of exploitive sexuality.” It is her contention that a “new asceticism” may enable individuals to “dehabituate” themselves from distorted patterns of action and thought characteristic of some aspects of contemporary culture.⁶⁴³ Religious activists such as Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and others have realized in practice something of the same synthesis of asceticism and radical social resistance.⁶⁴⁴ Such time-honored ascetic practices as fasting, contemplation, and voluntary poverty figure prominently in their activism. As some would point out, these singular lives embodied “a new synthesis of traditional religious teachings with con-

temporary political realities, and even more, they dramatized their teachings by enlisting spiritually disciplined practices in their public struggles.” One senses in such lives a uniquely powerful and credible witness for the revitalization of ascetic practice within the context of prophetic religious activism.⁶⁴⁵

The future of Christian ascetic practice is unclear. No doubt, various proposals and reflections on the emergence of a “new asceticism” by theologians and other scholars help to clarify the situation somewhat. But there can be little question that what is actually done at the pastoral level will prove determinative. Religious functionaries — priests, ministers, spiritual directors, pastoral counselors, religious activists — mediate between the classic resources of Christian tradition, its sacred texts, rituals, dogmas, as well as its saints and prophets, and the economic, ideological, psychological and idiosyncratic forces that shape the pastoral needs of the faithful. It is also in the practice of pastoral care that potentially creative antinomies (opposition between one law, principle, rule, etc. and another) closely related to ascetic practice — those between contemplation and action, the authority of tradition and individual autonomy, identity formation and self-transcendence and others — can be more fully embraced and at least partially resolved. A credible ascetic practice for our time will encourage the confession of and liberation from self-centered and collectively shared inhibitions to the love of God and neighbor. It will discover and address such inhibitions as they are manifest not only in the slavish surrender to bodily desires but also in traditional asceticism’s newly repented tendency toward the denigration and repression of these same desires. More subtly, it will note inhibitions to spiritual discernment and compassionate service in the studied alternation of surrender and repression that caters to the more refined indulgences of the “well-balanced” ego.⁶⁴⁶

This penetration at some length into the ups and downs of asceticism within mainly Christian generations could be easily settled if one decides to understand what the final Prophet (ﷺ) and the final Scripture, this Qur’an, have to say about the whole matter. This discourse of the Qur’an, coupled with the prophetic model of Muham-

mad (ﷺ), demonstrate that non-excessive pleasure and moderate joy are permissible, indeed commendable. The new generation of scripture — the Muslims — should no longer be shackled by the irons of previous generations. The simple fact of this matter is that man is a combination of soul and soil. What this “integrated” human has to do is to find the tempered balance in this nature of his. The body has its right and the soul has its right. This reconciliation of both makes for perfection. A populace that is able to sustain such a state of equilibrium becomes a leading model for the rest of mankind. This harmonious arrangement or relation of parts within the human whole begins to work its way into new scientific breakthroughs and higher social responsibilities. In today’s world, however, the unfortunate truth is that Muslim individuals have not been able to gel together into an *ummah* so as to live out this symmetry that is capable of bringing out the best in man and maximizing his potential.

Human nature is human nature; there will always be that individual tendency to go to the outer limits of denying one’s self. In being more animated about this basic human susceptibility than necessary, some companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) volunteered their self-denial on their own terms. They proposed an abstinence from food and women for the remainder of their lives; others among them wanted to fast the days and pray the nights away — for God’s sake. But the Messenger of mercy (ﷺ) forbade them.

Herewith, from recorded Islamic history, are a few examples of human nature reacting to its own potential inadequacies by looking for a solution outside of Allah’s (ﷻ) prescription. These examples should serve as a lesson for individuals and groups that go to the extreme, are beyond the norm, and add a bit too much of their own notions to their already organic God-given nature. What are known as *ẓinatullāh* and the *ṭayyibāt* — Allah’s (ﷻ) enhancement/adornment and the wholesome things in life — do not accrue to those who deny Allah (ﷻ); rather they belong to those who affirm Him. No Muslim should regard himself to be outside the pale of Islam just because he improves his appearance, either by adding beauty to it or by partaking of the healthy things in life. More of this theme will recur in *Sūrah al-A’raf*.

A man approached the Prophet (ﷺ) and said, “O Messenger of Allah! When I eat meat I find myself spread out among women [meaning that after eating meat, he was more beguiled by the company of women], and then I am overwhelmed by my lust for them; so I have decided to prohibit myself from the consumption of meat.” For this human liability toward self-damage, the *āyah* is proscriptive, **“O you who are committed [to Allah]! Do not prohibit the healthy and wholesome [things in life] that Allah has made lawful to you.”**⁶⁴⁷

This *āyah* was revealed in response to a band of *ṣaḥābah* (companions) who said to themselves, “We shall cut off our penises and part with the lusts of this world, and then go out into this world the way [some] monks do.” This “internal thought” of theirs reached the Prophet (ﷺ) who then summoned them. He asked them if what he heard was correct, and they affirmed it. To this, the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

*But I fast and break my fast, I pray during the night and I sleep my night, and I have sexual relations [with my wives]. Whoever partakes of my practice and pattern (sunnah) belongs to me and whoever does not partake of my practice and pattern does not belong to me.*⁶⁴⁸

Citing similar circumstances, another narrative concerning the same *āyah* says that it was revealed in response to ‘Uthmān ibn Maẓ‘ūn and his associates who vowed to abstain from many pleasurable things in life as well as abstaining from sexual contact; some of them were even contemplating disfigurement by severing their penises.⁶⁴⁹

A fourth narration related to the revelation of this *āyah* describes the following human dynamic. There were a number of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) companions who queried his wives about his private devotional behavior, that is, any extra acts of dedication to Allah (ﷻ) away from the public eye. It appears these companions had a hunch that the Prophet (ﷺ) was doing more in his personal life in the form of rituals and religious rites beyond what everyone knew of the *farā’id* and *sunan* (the mandatory and voluntary). They thought there was some dimension that would lead to perfection,

but to which they had no access. To them, surely the Prophet was doing more than they were aware of, and they further reasoned that they did not know about it because the Prophet (ﷺ) did not want to burden them with what apparently only applied to him. It is even reported that 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās slept at his Aunt Māymūnah's — one of the Prophet's wives — dwelling to observe the noble Messenger's (ﷺ) *ṣalāh* during the night. So in order to try and compensate for their perceived “less than adequate” performance, some of these overzealous companions decided to never partake of meat, others resolved to withdraw from sex altogether, and yet others were determined never to sleep on beds or mats. This whole episode eventually reached the Prophet (ﷺ) who remarked,

*What is wrong with those people who say such and such... As for me, I fast and I break my fast, I sleep and I rise, I eat meat, and I marry women; whoever desires another [different] practice and pattern does not belong to me.*⁶⁵⁰

A fifth story places the *āyah* in the following context. Ibn Mas'ūd said that he and some other companions were out on military expeditions with the Prophet (ﷺ), but had no women with them. So they asked him, “Should we castrate ourselves [put an end to the sex drive in our testicles]?” The Prophet (ﷺ) forbade them from that kind of self-mutilation. However, he temporarily permitted them to climax with willing clothed women, but not go all the way to intercourse. This may be considered *nikāh al-mut'ah* (sexual gratification marriage), which the Prophet (ﷺ) allowed during long sojourns, but later banned.⁶⁵¹

To understand why this type of “marriage” was permitted, the human nature, human society, and the “moral” standards of that time need to be considered more closely. It is worth contemplating that the process a person engages in to work his way up to the Islamic moral standard in some issues does not happen over night or in a flash; time is part of the solution. So in this particular instance, pertaining to man's sex drive and the traditions of society, the fact that pre-Islamic Arabians used to fornicate and have sex without

being married should be acknowledged, coterminous with a recommended solution to raise the moral standard. So when Islamic military responsibilities were thrust upon them, requiring these early Muslims to go long distances while being separated from their wives, they encountered an “internal military front” in which the fire of sex could have consumed them. This led those of them who had an iron will to think about castration and emasculation. Those who were prone to fall prey to their temptations were vulnerable to adultery and extramarital sex, with all of its attendant perversion and loss of morals. Thus, *zawāj al-mut‘ah* was a relief for both those who were thinking of castrating themselves and those who were tempted to fornicate. This type of sexual gratification marriage was meant to solve a temporary problem; it was not meant to be widespread and institutionalized so as to threaten the institution of *nikāḥ* (marriage and wedlock) and to demean the women in society.

There were also some companions of Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) who wanted to reject worldly allure, forsake women, and become monks. The Prophet (ﷺ) took a stand, even as people wanted to do injustice to themselves, and after rebuking them with strong words, said,

People before you perished because they went to extremes; they turned caustic against their own selves, then Allah became harsh with them. And so you may see that what is left of them are the ruins of their [religious and industrial] societies. Therefore, conform to Allah and do not equate others with Him, perform your major and minor pilgrimages, and be forthright [with Him] for Him to be forthright with you.⁶⁵²

God Decides What Is Good or Bad for Man

Enumerating some historical specifics about the first *āyah* of this particular sequence has prepared the ground for a more general appraisal of the extended lesson itself, through which the common thread is the notion of “authorization.” This “authorization” belongs to Allah (ﷻ), it comes from Him, and no one else has neither the right, or the position to interfere with this divine authority that acquaints man with what is permissible and what is not, what is moral and what is not, what is the standard and what is not, and what is legal and what is not. Muslims know that Allah (ﷻ) is the first and last authority on what constitutes admissible denial of desires and what is tantamount to excessive denial of desires. Only Allah (ﷻ) is capable of defining with authority what is lawful and what is unlawful. Only Allah (ﷻ) can give an order to do or not to do something. All human affairs have to be referred to this golden rule of Allah’s (ﷻ) ascendancy, assurance, and authorization.

One of the most destructive developments in human life, if not the most destructive, is the assumption of this divine attribute by human beings — kings and presidents. Any monarch, chief executive, prime minister, or the like who takes it upon himself to tell people what is morally right and what the legal standards are in exclusion of God, prophet, and scripture, is attempting to perform a divine function. No one — absolutely no one — has the right to set the moral standard or to promulgate the legal law of the land in exclusion of Allah (ﷻ). Any government, establishment, system, or regime that tries to do so assaults Allah (ﷻ) in His central relationship with man: His authority over human life. Hence when man tries to usurp God’s all-important attribute — His authority — he is acting aggressively against Him. Any citizenry or population that goes along with displacing God’s authority with the authority of feeble man is guilty of a cardinal sin. One cannot commit himself to Allah (ﷻ) and deny His authority at the same time. By rejecting Allah’s (ﷻ) authority, man’s commitment is suspect, regardless of what he says.

Notice that when Allah (ﷻ) speaks about His authority in this lesson He opens up every *āyah* with, “**O you who are committed [to Allah’s power and authority],**”

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Do not prohibit the wholesome things that Allah has allowed you to have and do not transgress... (5:87);

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Intoxicants and games of chance, and idolatrous practices, and the divining of the future are but a loathsome evil of Satan's doing: shun it... (5:90);

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Most certainly Allah will try you by means of the game [animals] that may come within the reach of your hands and your weapons [while you are on pilgrimage], so that Allah might mark out those who fear Him although He is beyond the reach of human perception... (5:94);

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Kill no game [animals] while you are in the state of pilgrimage... (5:95);

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Do not ask about matters that, if they were to be made manifest to you [in terms of law], might cause you hardship... (5:101);

O you who are committed [to Allah]! It is [but] for your own selves that you are responsible: those who go astray can do you no harm if you [yourselves] are on the right path (5:105);

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Let there be witnesses to what you do when death approaches you and you are about to make bequests: two persons of probity from among your own people, or — if the pangs of death come upon you while you are traveling far from home — two other persons from [among people] other than your own... (5:106);

A lesson like this that places authority and the power to exercise authoritative or dominating control and influence over human life, human beings, and humanity delegitimizes materialism and secularism. Man's relationship with Allah throughout the ages has been tested by this pivotal attribute of divinity — Allah's (ﷻ) authority. In the real world, when man accepts the divinity of Allah he also accepts His authority. However, Allah's (ﷻ) authority is not meant to break the back of man; it is meant to empower him,

O you who are committed to Allah! Do not deprive yourselves of the good things of life that Allah has made lawful to you, but do not transgress the bounds of what is right: verily, Allah does not love those who transgress the bounds of what is right. Thus, partake of the lawful good things that Allah grants you as sustenance, and be conscious of Allah [His power presence] — to whom you are committed (5:87).

Man's commitment to Allah (ﷻ) deters him from assuming His prerogatives and attributes. Man, therefore, may not legalize His proscriptions, nor may he prohibit His prescriptions. Thus, he is not permitted to boycott the things in life that Allah (ﷻ) has made lawful and healthy. Man cannot, on the spur of his devotional passion, say to himself that he is not going to eat, as a matter of gaining proximity with God, meat or any other food. It is Allah (ﷻ) who has provided man with sustenance, provisions, food, and nutriments; and it is Him — only Him — who can say what is lawful and what is not on this human plate. So if Allah (ﷻ) is the Creator, the Maker, the Sustainer, and the Provider, then He is also the authority on what is hearty and healthy and what is not. And if we, the Muslims, are committed to Him, as we claim, then we must be committed to all His attributes. We cannot commit to Him as a Creator and aggress against Him as a lawgiver. Impossible.

But there are and will always be those types of human beings who want to be "holier than thou"; they want to show they are ahead of everyone else in their devotion and service to God, so

they may even resolve not to eat certain wholesome food, or not to engage in sexual intercourse. Even if they go so far as to swear to it, their words will not count for, **“Allah will not take you to task for oaths you have uttered without thought, but He will take you to task for oaths you have sworn in earnest.”** Oaths and vows that are made in contradiction to Allah (ﷻ) carry no weight. These types of people should be brought to their senses, to the understanding that it is not up to them to say this is *ḥalāl* and that is *ḥarām*. Like it or not, this whole issue belongs to Allah (ﷻ).

Oaths that are verbalized without a strong conviction are left to dissipate with the merits of the correction. In contrast, those oaths that are undertaken with conviction, resolve, and firmness of purpose are to be expiated,

Thus, the breaking of an oath must be atoned for by feeding ten needy persons with more or less the same food as you are wont to give to your own families, or by clothing them, or by freeing a human being from bondage; and he who has not the wherewithal shall fast for three days [instead] (5:89).

In no other social system known to man does a psychological problem contribute to social justice. The misguided determination of some overzealous Muslims is channeled into relief for less fortunate people. Out of the desire to be “self-achievers,” those Muslims end up contributing to the well-being of society, even though, to begin with, that was not their overriding intention. In this instance, that “holier-than-thou” attitude is brought down to earth and its possessors are obliged to feed ten destitute individuals — and the food has to be from their own kitchen, from what they themselves would consume, and not something of lesser value. Or they may clothe these individuals from their own wardrobe, and not with garments of inferior quality. Or they can liberate a human being from slavery.⁶⁵³ And whoever is not able to avail any of those options is required to fast for three days.⁶⁵⁴ Social justice demands that individual liability be not limited to individualistic atonements.

When a person decides to go against the grain of moderation in this Qur'an by taking on an ascetic disposition, he ends up being reprimanded with a responsibility toward the society around him.

The larger picture here is that Allah (ﷻ) alone is the authority on what is good for man and what is bad. Hence, if there are people who want to bar themselves from what is *ḥalāl* claiming that they are doing so to reach “new heights with Allah (ﷻ),” then they are talking nonsense. Asceticism that runs counter to human nature is self-defeating and self-destructing. And it neither has validation in scripture, nor precedence in prophethood. Life was meant to grow and expand; some forms of denial are just the opposite: contraction and self-abasement. Monasticism, the forms of asceticism practiced in monasteries, and the denial of the good things in life run against the will to live and to thrive. They are not in harmony with God and the way life was meant to be. The larger issue here, not to be overshadowed, is that human social beings are not the executors of what good intentions will be appropriate to approach God; He has offered people the way and the light to do so. Any other approach will be fraught with setbacks and pitfalls.

Materialism Creates a Rationale for Asceticism

When man loses sight of Allah's (ﷻ) authority he begins to bounce back and forth between the extremes of asceticism and materialism. Both of them are equally vicious, equally corrosive, and equally offensive. It could even be said that the one (asceticism) is a reaction to the other (materialism). The world today, under the spectre of the institutional greed of capitalism, has almost lost touch with the happy median, the prosperous midway, and the advantageous mean. Condemning monasticism does not in any way, shape, or form endorse the extreme of selfishness and gluttony. Some people living now in the affluent societies are basically animals in human skin, and this is inclusive of, if not especially so, presidents, CEOs, and generals. These are the ones who are digging their graves with their own teeth.

The worst part of all this is the “logic” or reasoning built into the justification of asceticism and self-indulgence. One extreme becomes the rationale for the other. Looking into the background of asceticism calls for an equal treatment of the other end of the reactive spectrum where compulsive eating or bingeing is to be found. Compulsive binge eating, bulimia, and anorexia nervosa are considered to be the three major eating disorders in America, one of the most affluent societies in the world and in history. Though most normal-weight individuals periodically overeat, compulsive behavior is indicative of an underlying problem.

Compulsive eating is often triggered by unresolved emotional issues. Like addiction, abstaining from food may cause symptoms of distress. The failure to acknowledge personal feelings and to resolve personal pain may be underlying factors in compulsive eating disorders. Identifying the feelings that are being shunned and working through alternative ways of dealing with emotions represent powerful first steps in recovery. Available programs provide a framework for change and a strong support system. One example is the 12-step program of Overeaters Anonymous, patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous.⁶⁵⁵ Individualized programs assist the client in feeling safer and more in control of eating behavior. Programs usually involve psychological counseling, provision of emotional support, behavior modification, education about addictions, nutrition counseling, a balanced diet, and regular exercise.

Behavior modification involves learning to eat only when hungry and to stop eating when hunger is satisfied. Counseling can help with attitudes toward food and self-nourishment. Affirming that the sufferer has the choice to eat or not, without judgement, and that he is in control at every bite, are valuable steps forward. During a binge, identifying underlying feelings may clarify whether food is being substituted for a deeper need, such as love and acceptance. Counseling also emphasizes a return to eating normally after bingeing and self-forgiveness in order to break patterns of guilt and self-defeat. A diet diary can reveal eating patterns and the accompanying feelings. Eating more whole, fresh foods and eating less highly processed convenience foods moves the individual to a more

balanced diet. As an added benefit, avoiding sugar and sweets may stabilize blood sugar levels and moderate mood swings that can trigger a bout of bingeing. When Allah (ﷻ) says, **“Do not ban the good things of life that Allah has made lawful to you...”** and, **“... eat that which Allah has provided for you as nourishment and extremely pleasing to the senses...”** man is forced to confront what this means in a world that is being devoured by two extremes: starvation (hunger) and gluttony (satiety).⁶⁵⁶

Hunger, a compelling need to eat brought on by food deprivation, is often accompanied by a painful unpleasant feeling and weakness. The body's energy stores are depleted with hunger. Rhythmic contractions (peristalsis) of an empty stomach are responsible for hunger pangs; these become more frequent the longer a meal is delayed. To a limited extent, stomach contractions are regulated by blood sugar levels and by distension of the stomach when filled. Hunger is regulated by several brain centers, primarily, it is thought, by the hypothalamus, via a “feeding center” and a “satiety center.”⁶⁵⁷ Normally the hypothalamus functions as an integration center for a variety of signals; possibly brain centers sense a decline in blood sugar levels, for example. Other hypotheses involve the production in the brain of neuropeptides. Some are identical with gut peptides, where they stimulate or inhibit eating. Cholecystokinin, formed in the gut and in the brain, inhibits eating.⁶⁵⁸ Long-term control of body weight relies upon how to most efficiently regulate these mechanisms, either through the consumption of a balanced diet or through interventionist regimens that seek to stimulate or depress the body's levels of neuropeptides and hormones. Leptin, a protein produced by body fat, directs the brain to stop producing signals that stimulate feeding.⁶⁵⁹ Leptin could curtail production of specific brain peptides on the one hand and it could also block norepinephrine and related neurotransmitters that trigger hunger and increase basal metabolism on the other hand. Overall eating patterns reflect internal regulatory mechanisms, psychological influences such as stress and mood, environmental factors like climate, and diseases such as mental illness.

On the opposite end of the spectrum is satiety — the sense of being filled up and having the appetite satisfied. Appetite is a complex phenomenon involving many psychological and biochemical factors. No single event is likely to control it. Fats and oils in foods slow emptying of the stomach and contribute to the feeling of being full. Researchers are exploring the hypothesis that depleted fat cells may signal the brain to eat and cause hunger after weight loss. Leptin, a recently discovered protein produced by fat cells, has been shown to enter the brain and control the consumption of fatty foods. Dietary fiber, undigestible plant material, swells when moistened, creating a feeling of fullness. As an added benefit, fiber displaces calorie-rich foods, so fewer calories are needed for one to feel satisfied.

Mechanical contact with food triggers the stomach and intestine to release gut peptides that trigger satiety. This feedback mechanism takes 10–20 minutes, during which signals are being sent back to the brain. For example, the hormone cholecystokinin signals the brain to stop sending hunger signals after eating. Whether cholecystokinin can be manipulated by dietary changes is not known for certain. Brain peptides are also probably involved in regulatory food consumption and satiety. Enterostatin decreases fat intake in experimental animals.⁶⁶⁰ The development of drugs to increase satiety is currently an area of active research. Strategies to promote a feeling of satiation and to curb appetite include eating a snack one half-hour before a meal, eating slowly, chewing each bite thoroughly, and then waiting 20 minutes before taking a second helping. These approaches give hormones and other biochemical messengers time to reach the brain and create a feeling of fullness.

Aside from the chemistry and physiology of hunger and satiety, hunger is a worldwide problem and continues to be an international issue. An estimated two billion malnourished people populate the planet and their numbers are rising dramatically. Hunger is common among what are called developing nations as well as among underclass populations of developed nations. Children are the most vulnerable to malnutrition. In the developing countries of Asia and Africa breastfeeding assures adequate nutrition for the infant until

he is about six months of age. Subsequently, hunger takes a greater toll. Practices such as relying on formula feeding rather than breast-feeding are detrimental when the formula is diluted or cannot be prepared with sterile water or refrigeration. The failure of children to grow at normal rates indicates chronic, severe problems. Malnourished infants who survive chronic hunger still bear its emotional and physical burden, not to mention mental retardation, which is a possible consequence. Indirect consequences of marginal nutrition include infectious diseases, diarrhea, and parasitic diseases such as malaria. Protein-calorie malnutrition due to severe food restriction is the most prevalent form among children.⁶⁶¹

Maternal nutrition is often marginal where hunger is endemic, and women in developing countries often bear the brunt of hunger within a family. The mother often feeds her family first and subsists on what is left. In addition, these women often provide the physical labor required to obtain food for their families, even during pregnancies.⁶⁶²

Poverty and hunger are linked by a complex web: lack of education, poor health, little political voice, inadequate food distribution and lack of technical information, all of which are enforced by those possessing education and political and military power, those controlling resources and profitting off cash crops, and those holding a monopoly on technology. Poverty is said to link hunger with overpopulation, which is another pressing worldwide concern. The human population base on the planet within a transnational resource monopoly of the elites and corporations is approaching seven billion. In another century it may even double.⁶⁶³

World food production can provide all people with ample calories, according to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization. Generally, when there has been economic growth and equal distribution of resources among most groups in a population, population growth rates have declined. Land reform in which more people have an input in food production also seems essential. The “Green Revolution” of the 1960s failed to achieve its goal of making countries self-sufficient in food production because it generally ignored local culture, traditional agriculture, and economic

factors such as dependency on imported chemical fertilizers. Food distribution appears to be a critical factor. The problem of unequal distribution of resources is compounded by the fact that in most countries, governments dictate daily life. In addition at least 20% of annual total food production is wasted by spoilage and pests, contributing to food shortages.⁶⁶⁴

Multinational corporations involved in exporting plantation crops and a preoccupation with profitability may indirectly contribute to hunger when cultivated land is used for luxury and export crops, rather than for traditional staples, despite starvation and local severe malnutrition. Thus regions of Africa are net exporters of coffee, cocoa, peanuts, and cattle, as well as beans and barley, despite having the greatest incidence of severe malnutrition among children. The Presidential Commission on World Hunger (1980), in the United States, concluded that nations have the capability of remedying global hunger and that the global demand for food requires political and technical solutions to the above problems, that assistance programs need to focus on self-reliance, and that developing countries need to develop effective food production and distribution systems and to emphasize education.⁶⁶⁵

Rarely does one come across a systematic and mainstream flow of information that puts both hunger and satiety in the proper context of individuals and societies and then offers a solution with confidence, but this is exactly what is to be found throughout this social Scripture. Going directly to the lifestyle and behavior of Allah's impeccable Messenger (ﷺ), who was a model of the Qur'an, ought to sideline any literature that extols hunger on one end, and its counterpart, the literature that rationalizes overeating on the other end. Islamic historical information indicates that the Prophet (ﷺ) would eat what was available to him; at times he would eat delicious food such as the meat of cattle, poultry, and game, while at other times he would make do with the bare necessities such as barley bread seasoned with salt, oil, or even vinegar. There were occasions in which he would endure hunger, and those where he would experience semi-satiation. In this manner his behavior covered the gamut of what may be considered allowable for human beings in

the vast majority of circumstances they find themselves in, and as such, he provided the prototypical example for people who are on the prosperous side of life as well as for those who are on the destitute side of life. Some sources of Islamic history appear to indicate that he was more concerned with what he drank than with what he ate. In one verbal description, Umm al-Mu'minīn 'Ā'ishah, his wife, said, "Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was most fond of whatever drink was sweet and cool."⁶⁶⁶ In the Sunan of Abū Dāwūd, it is said that he found the water of Suqyā to be delectable.⁶⁶⁷ According to those scholars who have looked into this matter, the Prophet (ﷺ) liked freshwater, sweet water, water sweetened with honey or the solution of dates or raisins, or anything along these lines.

Bad Oaths Are Expiated by Atonement

Allah will not take you to task for oaths you may have uttered without thought, but He will take you to task for oaths you have sworn in earnest. Thus, the breaking of an oath must be atoned for by feeding ten needy persons with more or less the same food as you are wont to give to your own families, or by clothing them, or by freeing a human being from bondage; and he who has not the wherewithal shall fast for three days [instead]. This shall be the atonement for your oaths whenever you have sworn [and broken them]. But be mindful of oaths! Thus Allah makes clear unto you His presentations, so that you might have cause to be grateful (5:89).

This *āyah* untangles the rudimentary behavior of some people in the time of Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) who imposed upon themselves unnecessary restrictions by swearing oaths to the effect that they would never eat meat or have sexual intercourse. After placing themselves under the onus of their oaths and realizing they could not honor their resolve, they went to Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) and

asked him, “What do we do now that we have uttered these oaths?” The relief they were looking for came in the form of the revealed *āyāt* from, **“O you who are committed [to Allah]! Do not disallow the good things of life that Allah has made lawful to you...”** all the way to, **“Allah will not take you to task for oaths you may have uttered without thought...”**

In this context, intending to do something not sufficiently thought through, especially that which lies outside the bounds of Qur’anic common-sense — such as light-mindedly excluding from life the good things Allah (ﷻ) has endorsed for a healthy lifestyle — is akin to what might be called an indiscretion. In such a case, a person can repent for his ill-considered oath by making a concerted effort to not repeat the indiscretion and then proceeding to enjoy the good and sound things of life. One form of an innocuous and careless oath is when a person invokes God’s name while in a state of anger or rage. Another type of injudicious oath is when a person absentmindedly invokes God’s name. Yet further, when a person swears not to eat, drink, or wear things that are obvious necessities, no serious consequences accrue to invoking God’s name in this way. In short, such vows that have no reservoir of intention behind them are frivolous and should not be taken seriously.

Contrary to that, however, are oaths and vows that are expressed wholeheartedly. These are the pledges and affidavits that come from a strong and determined will to do the wrong thing or not to do the right thing. Allah (ﷻ) does take to task those who think through their rejection of what He has made permissible, and then deliberately and insistently shun what He has made lawful by rendering it unlawful, **“...but He will take you to task for oaths you have sworn in earnest...”** A person dying while in a state of proscribing the *ḥalāl* of Allah (ﷻ) is in serious trouble.

So, what if a person undertakes such an oath, pledge, or affidavit to, in effect, contradict God? Undoing such a fallacious act requires atonement,

...the breaking of an oath must be atoned for by feeding ten needy persons with more or less the same

food as you are wont to give to your own families, or by clothing them, or by freeing a human being from bondage (5:89).

The *kaffārah* (atonement) here literally refers to putting a cover on the misdeed, much the same way a farmer covers a planted seed with soil. The word *kaffārah* is used to indicate what may be done to cloak or mask such an act so that it no longer has any immediate or palpable impact on the current of events in life. This applies to all acts of transgression against Allah's (ﷻ) will. To compensate for such willful and inimical oaths, three options have been given, any one of which may constitute this *kaffārah*. The first and least demanding of these is to feed 10 needy persons where each is given one meal, and this meal has to be on par with what the atoning person and his family consume. It cannot be from the least expensive food that at times families may be forced to eat; and the meal cannot be from the extravagant food that families occasionally indulge in during holidays, parties, or invitations. It has to be from the day-to-day average consumption of that family's food. If a family's normal course is meat and vegetables then this is what should constitute the *kaffārah*. And should there be a doubt, then the atoner is counseled to err on the "plus" side and not on the "minus" side, meaning he would be better off giving a little more and a little better food to those who are needy. Some *mufasssirs* take the word *awsaṭ* in the *āyah* to mean the "best" food from he who is making amends.⁶⁶⁸

The second option for this *kaffārah*, which may require a more substantial financial outlay than the first, is to provide clothing for 10 needy people. Here, in the *āyah*, there is no specification for the type of clothes, but generally speaking it should be a garment, an ensemble, or an outfit. A hat, belt, socks, or underwear will not suffice. Some have said that the minimum articles of clothing would be what is enough to qualify a person to offer his *ṣalaḥ*.⁶⁶⁹

The third choice is the liberation of a slave; this obviously is the greatest of the three choices for the *kaffārah*. It could apply to a slave held in the service of some master, and it also could apply to a prisoner of war who is incarcerated in a detention system that

denies him his freedom. The Qur'anic expression *tahrīru raqabah* literally means the *liberation of a neck*, for it is the neck that is normally bound by a chain, leash, or cable in this humiliating human condition. The usage also alludes to a person not being able to raise his head.

“And he who does not have the wherewithal shall fast for three days [instead].” This would mean that if a person cannot feed or clothe ten needy persons, or cannot free a captive or a slave, then he is required to fast for three days. This is the least that can be done to atone for an oath that goes against Allah’s (ﷻ) will. If he is unable to do that because of an illness or ailment, he may express an intention to fast once he is able to do so. And, still if he is unable to do even that, he may pray to Allah (ﷻ) to forgive him due to his rehabilitated conscience and renewed sincerity. The lesson here is that honoring an oath, giving one’s word so to speak, especially one invoking God’s name, is a serious issue of character, and those who have been commissioned to carry Allah’s (ﷻ) final revelation can ill afford to counsel others while their own character flaws have not been resolved,

This shall be the atonement for your oaths whenever you have sworn [and broken them]. But be mindful of your oaths! Thus Allah makes clear to you His manifestations, so that you might have cause to be grateful (5:89).

Swearing by Allah (ﷻ) should never be taken lightly. And it should be only used at times of “deadlock” when there is not enough confidence either in the self or in a conversation among many. However, when a Muslim does utter an oath by invoking Allah’s name, it should be exactly that: by invoking Allah’s (ﷻ) name and no one else’s.

Alcohol: the Gateway to Addiction

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Intoxicants, and games of chance, and idolatrous practices, and the divining of the future are but a loathsome evil of Satan's doing: shun it, then, so that you might attain to a happy state! By means of intoxicants and games of chance Satan seeks only to sow enmity and hatred among you, and to turn you away from the remembrance of Allah and from *ṣalāh*. Will you not, then, desist? Hence, obey Allah and obey the Apostle, and be ever on your guard [against evil]; and if you turn away, then know that Our Apostle's only duty is a clear delivery of the message [entrusted to him] (5:90–92).

Going back to *Sūrah al-Baqarah* (2:219), recall that Allah (ﷻ) introduced a step-by-step approach to the eradication of the social habit of addiction. Alcoholism, gambling, idolatrous practices, and divining of the future were prominent features of a world without Islamic order. Their roots were deeply buried and infused into the *jāhili* societies and habitats of that world. All of these social vices were, in a way, connected to each other. They became part of the societies' culture and "modernity."

People in the pre-Islamic domain were inebriated. Each culture and society had its own type of bars and pubs. In Arabia, a liquor or a brew containing alcohol became an integral part of poetry, featured prominently with fanfare and pomp. Diners would readily consume alcohol while feasting on skewered and roasted meat, and then proceed into all the loose social behavior that attends such settings. The meat served in these banquets came from an animal slaughtered in the *jāhili* tradition at the *anṣāb*, which were idols set aside for purposes of animal offerings. Not only was the animal's spilled blood served to these idols, but portions of its flesh were left at the altar as an offering to the gods and the religious custodians of the idols. Conspicuous in these venues of alcohol and meat consumption were myriad gambling opportunities

coupled with the *azlām* — headless and featherless arrows used in divining the future or in distributing the meat according to a drawn arrow and its associated share. No doubt, this was a society infused with all kinds of social vices. Even so, it should never be understood that such vices are only endemic to a certain place or time. They are as commonplace in the “modern” world, with all the attendant social pathology, as in the ancient world, which in and of itself begs the question of what the meaning of “progress” is.

In the way the Islamic program began to take root in Makkah, it appears that the merciful approach of Islam and the Qur’an did not pay much attention to eradicating these vices in the initial stages of Islam there. Because these social vices are entrenched in concepts or ideas that are themselves decadent, it becomes a waste of time, effort, and commitment to deal with the symptoms of a problem rather than with the core issue, which, as such things often go, is concealed by the plethora of its outward and public manifestations. The reactive human tendency is to try to deal with the most troublesome symptom, generally to show that something is being done, despite the fact that the untreated cause is still metastasizing into a much more highly complex animal. Allah’s (ﷻ) systematic program is meant to cut through all the artificial and contrived layers so as to treat the root cause, which when restored to a state of health will mitigate all of its deleterious effects.

The first things people should consider when trying to eliminate such problems are the convictions and concepts that lead to problematic, dysfunctional, and ultimately destructive social behavior. And in this case the conception and popular opinion about *jāhiliyyah* itself is what has to be eradicated and that social void filled by the Islamic conception and popular opinion. The adherence to and the advancement of Islam can only come through the depths of man’s convictions and the profoundness of his confidence. In this state of transition, the people are going to have to see for themselves how utterly unsound and invalid their old belief system was and how vulnerable and destructive their erstwhile norms were. Simultaneously, they will have to understand how perfectly consistent,

suitable, and valid Allah's (ﷻ) system is. Once people bind to Allah (ﷻ) they will be willing to do everything He tells them because now they know who He is and who they are. When they become familiar with Allah (ﷻ) their hearts will become attuned to what He is saying, so much so that His counsel will stimulate them to overcome the bad habits they were drawn to by virtue of their lower instincts.

Laws can come down from heaven but they will not frame any kind of moral social pattern (*sunnah*) unless the people's hearts are attached to Allah (ﷻ). The Islamic laws delineated in the Qur'an are the best laws humanity will ever have but they will be worthless if human beings do not have hearts that love Allah (ﷻ) to the point of favoring His laws above all those composed by His temporal rivals. The key to unraveling these social vices and problems is at the level of human disposition, potential, and nature, and so long as these are locked away from Allah (ﷻ), no measure of law is going to be able to set human society aright.

In the United States, the people were not so attached to God and His counsel as to detach themselves from their addictions and moral afflictions. Recent American history has already been through a failed bout with what was called Prohibition (1920–1933) — an attempt to proscribe the “manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors,” authorized by the 18th Amendment to the US Constitution (1919) and the Volstead Act of 1919.⁶⁷⁰ The new law was initially endorsed by a broad public sector, especially since sobriety had been touted during WWI as essential to victory; moreover, drunkenness was considered to be the root cause of violence, poverty, and the breakdown of the family. By the time Prohibition went into effect, 33 states governing 63% of the US population had already banned alcohol. Prohibition worked — sort of. While the country was hardly “dry” — bootleggers and illegal barrooms called *speakeasies* abounded — alcohol consumption did decline, and pre-18th Amendment levels of consumption were not reached again until 1975.⁶⁷¹

Prohibition also has been blamed for a variety of social ills including the rise of organized crime, government corruption, and

widespread contempt for the law. Before Prohibition went into effect in 1920, liquor-store advertisements urged people to stock up while supplies lasted. Despite the fact that Prohibition was widely regarded as a failure, and because it was codified in the 18th Amendment to the US Constitution, few believed it could successfully be repealed. At least this was the feeling in 1930 when Texas senator Morris Sheppard said, "There is as much chance of repeal as there is for a hummingbird to fly to the planet Mars with the Washington Monument tied to its tail."⁶⁷² However, later in that year, the US Supreme Court made Prohibition harder to enforce by ruling that buying liquor did not violate the US Constitution!

In spite of its early acceptance, Prohibition began to meet with great resistance, especially in urban immigrant communities, and generated a large bootlegging industry. It was ended by the repeal of the 18th Amendment in 1933. Prohibition was preceded by the Anti-Saloon League, a US civic advocacy organization established in 1895 with the express aim of forbidding the sale of alcoholic drinks by amending the US Constitution and by enacting state and local anti-alcohol laws. Even though the League remained active during and after the Prohibition period, becoming part of the National Temperance League in 1950, American society was nonetheless plagued by addiction, alcoholism, depression, and all the family and civic volatility that are associated with alcohol abuse.

The Islamic success over 14 centuries ago and the American failure today in triumphing over the deleterious consequences of alcohol consumption has to do with how differently the two contrasting power cultures approached this psycho-social problem. Islamic conformity to Allah (ﷻ) begins by affirming His grip over the human psyche, brain, and soul. The Muslim confesses to this relationship when he utters his testimonial, or *shahādah*: I testify that there is no deity/authority other than Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

The first Muslims in Makkah built on this strengthening relationship throughout 13 difficult years of binding with Allah (ﷻ) while unbinding with a materialistic and carnal way of life. During this time period these maturing Muslims were taken up by, preoc-

cupied with, and disciplined by Allah (ﷻ). They may have been drinking, gambling, conducting *ribā* transactions, and engaging in other vices, but there was something in them that was being subdued and then replaced by Allah (ﷻ). Their hearts and the loci of their feelings and intuitions were subsumed and contained by Allah (ﷻ). Their center, core, and composition became fertile with this relationship with Allah (ﷻ). Once they reached this comfortable relationship of intimacy with Allah (ﷻ) they were willing to do whatever had to be done to obey Him. They now knew that whatever He chose for them was for their benefit. And when they began to acquire this kind of confidence they naturally assumed their responsibilities among which were their scheduled observances and practices. Amidst this transformation, they realized they would have to purge themselves of all *jāhili* behavioral traits, psychological attributes, ethical conventions, social customs, and economic ways. Near the end of the Makkan period of the Muhammadī prophetic mission, the time was right for Allah (ﷻ) to give them laws because they were now ready to obey. They knew better than to claim that their own knowledge superseded God's.

When the final Islamic prohibition on alcohol (and related addictions, vices) was announced it was by no means a surprise. Preceding this final stage were other phases that set the stage for the final verdict on alcoholism and addiction. Slowly but surely the maturing Islamic environment in Arabia left behind its *jāhili* habits and dependencies, and entered into its new Islamic consciousness, circumstances, and surroundings.

Islamic prohibition developed through the following distinct time periods and sequence of events. The first, revealed in Makkah, centered around a very general reference to the whole matter of fixation and craving, **“And from the blooms of date-palm trees and grapevines you bring about a concentrated drink (*sakar*) and a wholesome source of nourishment” (16:67)**. This first red flag juxtaposed or contrasted in the Muslim conscience a concentrated or fermented drink with a healthful nutriment.

The second phase further stirred the Muslim conscience, which was growing stronger in its relationship with Allah (ﷻ).

The following *āyah* in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* was to widen the distance between the Muslim sense of morality on the one hand and intoxicants and inebriants on the other,

They will ask you [O Muhammad] concerning intoxicants and gambling. Say [to them], “In both of them there is significant contemptibility and benefits for people; their contemptibility is more than their benefits” (2:219).

The inference here is to desist from these habits knowing that in them is more harm than advantage. Rarely are there things that are devoid of any and all benefit; but when their harm and damage is substantive enough to be the genesis of subsequent and significant social deviation, then they should be avoided.

The third phase focused on breaking the habit of drinking by disallowing attendees from appearing for *ṣalāh* while inebriated, “**O you who are committed [to Allah]! Do not approach *ṣalāh* while you are intoxicated — until you are aware of what you are saying” (4:43).** Well known is the fact that *ṣalāh* is performed five times a day, most of which are short intervals apart, short enough, that is, to avert a person from getting drunk and then going to *ṣalāh*. This is a realistic way of making both drinking and praying inconceivable and impractical in the stretch of one day. In the pre-Islamic Arabian tradition, intoxicants were mostly imbibed in the morning, in the last quarter of the day, or at sunset. The conflict between the discipline of the *ṣalāh* and the habit of drinking forced the committed Muslim to choose to honor his *ṣalāh* instead of falling prey to his habit of drinking.

Finally, in the last phase, as shown here in *Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, the prohibition became conclusive and definitive — at a time when everyone was essentially ready for the final say on issues of addiction and dependency. It is reported that ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said, “O Allah! Show us a decisive determination about intoxicants (*khamr*).” And then it is said that the aforementioned *āyah* in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* about intoxicants and gambling was revealed.⁶⁷³

After hearing the *āyah*, 'Umar nonetheless continued to beseech his Lord, "O Allah! Show us a decisive determination about intoxicants." And so the *āyah* in *Sūrah al-Nisā'* above was revealed. But upon listening to this *āyah*, 'Umar apparently was still not satisfied, and asked yet again, "O Allah! Show us a decisive determination about intoxicants." And thus eventually, the *āyah* in *Sūrah al-Mā'idah* was revealed,

By means of intoxicants and games of chance Satan seeks only to sow enmity and hatred among you, and to turn you away from the consciousness of Allah and from *ṣalāh*. Will you not, then, desist? (5:91).

And when 'Umar heard this *āyah* he said, "We desist, we desist."⁶⁷⁴

These prohibition *āyāt* were revealed three years subsequent to the Hijrah, after the Battle of Uḥud. And all it took for an individual who had a drink in his hands to smash it to the ground, for whoever may have had a mouthful of it to spit it out, and for containers of intoxicants to be disgorged was a public announcement to the effect, "Attention People! Intoxicants are now unlawful." With that, the ugly social habit of drinking and drunkenness came to a final end. Hence,

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Intoxicants, and gambling, and idolatrous practices, and the divining of the future are but a loathsome evil of Satan's doing: shun it, then, so that you might be successful. By means of intoxicants and gambling Satan seeks only to sow enmity and hatred among you, and turn you away from the awareness of Allah and from *ṣalāh*. Will you not, then desist? Hence, obey Allah, and obey the Apostle, and be ever on your guard [against evil]; and if you turn away, then know that Our Apostle's only duty is a clear delivery of the message [entrusted to him] (5:90-92).

One may ask why *khamr* was not prohibited early on, in one fell swoop as it were. By now, it should be top of mind that the practical implementation of this down-to-earth *dīn* refines the human nature that would ultimately manage a godly society. This maturing process takes time and effort, and progress therein is sequential and built upon learned behaviors. This is exactly what happened in the way the Qur'an was revealed as it was spread over 23 years of the Prophet's (ﷺ) life.

Committed Muslims are supposed to have the ambition of purifying society from its nasty habits, as is clear from the *āyāt* cited above. This is because they are the ones who are responsible for the society that is free of alcoholism in particular, and all other kinds of addiction in general. Even though there may be isolated individuals, here and there, who may be, in the privacy of their own dwellings, drinking or getting drunk (about which nothing much can be done), alcoholism and drunkenness, gambling and playing for money, graven images and idols, and fortune-telling as social mores cannot coexist with committed Muslims.

The *āyaḥ* above makes it clear that these social vices are *rijs* (filth) — the work of Satan. Moreover, they are not of the good things of life (*ṭayyibāt*) that Allah (ﷻ) has made lawful and enjoyable. Needless to say, Satan is the age-old enemy of man. For a sensitive committed Muslim to take action, he only needs to hear that these foul acts come from Satan. No normal and sane committed Muslim can afford to sit around and do nothing while the society around him is coming apart because of these evil pursuits. Therefore, the words to follow may only be anticipated by responsive committed Muslims, “...shun it, then, so that you may be prosperous.”

Following through with the rest of the *āyaḥ*, the Qur'an's enlightening words get into the reasons for eschewing such practices,

By means of intoxicants and speculation [gambling and wagering] Satan seeks only to sow enmity and hatred among you, and to turn you away from the recollection of Allah and from *ṣalāḥ*... (5:91).

Here, once again, the Islamic conscience is alerted to what Satan seeks to do with the human will. It appears that, indeed, Satan wants people to feel hostile and belligerent toward each other, and this includes those who count themselves as having committed themselves to their Creator. Drinking and gambling have the potential of eroding the mass *ṣalāh*, which is a pivotal feature of the Islamic society.

Compare the details of this almost 13-year American attempt at outlawing alcohol less than a century ago with the 13-year effort in Arabia over 14 centuries ago, and the opposite results that ensued. America failed; Islam succeeded. And this, clearly because the American way was materialistic while the Islamic way was(is) divine — pure and simple. In the Islamic way the moral conviction became a law; in the American way the law failed to become a moral conviction. And when morality fails, all types of profligacies, licentiousness, and worthlessness break out in society.

Taking a quick look at the morally degenerating American society, what started as the inability to prohibit alcohol consumption swelled into the proliferation of “legal” gambling establishments, with their modern day *jāhiliyah* of roulette (a form of *azlām*), blackjack, and craps.⁶⁷⁵ In Euro-secular history the first casino opened in 1765 in Baden-Baden, a spa town in southwestern Germany’s Black Forest near the border with France, and rules governing casino operation are part of the legal system in many countries. Among the world’s most famous casino locations are the American cities of Las Vegas, Nevada, and Atlantic City, New Jersey.

The ancient Arabian *jāhiliyah* has not gone away; rather it has been modernized. The simple gambling of nomads and Bedouins has been updated into the complex high-stakes wagering of elites and jet-setters. They now have their *baccarat*, which is a casino card game, the most popular version being *baccarat banque*, in which the bank plays against the players. Another variant is *chemin de fer*, whereby all players take turns holding the bank. *Baccarat* is derived from popular 15th-century European games of chance, and is thought to have been introduced into France from Italy during the reign of Charles VIII.

The Physiology of Addiction

Whenever alcohol is mentioned in the Qur'an, what is at issue is the problem of addiction, not to mention the social malaise that ensues. In a word, addiction is a state of dependence upon drugs, alcohol, or other substances. Symptoms include uncontrolled craving, tolerance, and withdrawal when access is denied. Habitual use produces changes in chemical processes in the brain; when the substance is withheld, severe neurological manifestations, even death, may follow. These are reversed by the administration of the addictive substance, and mitigated by a gradual reduction in dosage. A carefully controlled withdrawal program can reverse the chemical changes caused by habituation. Cure is difficult because of the many other factors contributing to addiction. Some research points to a genetic predisposition to addiction; the environment and psychological makeup could also be significant factors. Although physical addiction always has a psychological element, not all psychological dependence is accompanied by physical dependence.

The social problem of alcoholism and its equivalents are traceable to the satanic propensity toward addiction. The term *addiction* is widely used today to mean a dependency. The dependence, which can be physical and/or psychological, implies a compulsive or habitual need to repeat the experience. The physical addiction causes withdrawal symptoms, while the psychological addiction is responsible for the intense cravings. Marijuana, cocaine, and LSD dependencies are physical addictions. Alcohol and cigarettes are highly addictive, both physically and psychologically. With habitual use of these substances, tolerance levels increase and more is required to reach the same effect, even as the damage to the body continues unabated.

Drug abuse, which falls in the general category of what is included in the Qur'anic term *khamr*, is the use of a mind-altering drug without medical need, in an amount large enough or over a period long enough to threaten the quality of life or health and safety of the user or others. Many people use drugs without medical need but keep that use under control so that it does not threaten their health or adversely affect their functioning. Taking a drug

that does not alter the mind is still considered abusive if the drug is taken without medical need and if the drug endangers the quality of life or health and safety of the user or others. Overdose of a drug may occur as part of abuse; with some drugs, an overdose may be profoundly frightening or even fatal. Drug abuse has been evident in all socioeconomic groups and does not discriminate between highly educated and professional people on the one hand and the uneducated and unemployed on the other.

The more the Qur'an speaks about the work of Satan the more a curious mind understands what Allah (ﷻ) is saying, **"...and turn you away from the awareness of Allah and from ṣalāh."** This "turning away" refers to drug dependence as a compelling need to continue taking a mind-altering drug to induce pleasure, to relieve anxiety and tension, or to avoid discomfort. Drug dependence, caused by a combination of biological and psychological factors, may momentarily produce euphoria, feelings of increased mental and physical ability, and altered sense perceptions.

Dependence can be very powerful and difficult to overcome. The body adapts to the continuous use of a drug that produces dependence, leading to tolerance and to withdrawal symptoms when use stops. Tolerance is the need to use progressively larger amounts of a drug to reproduce the effects originally achieved with the starting amount. Withdrawal symptoms occur when drug use is stopped or when the drug's effects are blocked by another drug. A person undergoing withdrawal feels sick and may develop headaches, diarrhea, or shaking (tremors). Withdrawal can evoke a serious and even life-threatening illness.

Drug addiction is the disruptive behavior or activity associated with obtaining and using a drug that a person is dependent on. Addictions can be mild or serious. When an addiction becomes severe, it typically assumes greater importance than social acceptance, family, friends, the ability to work and study, and even life itself. Addictions tend to begin slowly and grow insidiously. The biggest impediment to treating addiction is recognition of the problem. Since there is no simple definition, the point where casual use becomes abuse is hazy in many people's minds, even ex-

perts. Drug and alcohol abuse, the most well-known forms of addiction, exist in epidemic proportions across the US population. Many support groups have formed to provide counseling and lifestyle adjustments for addicts and their families. Their programs have achieved noteworthy success in helping addicts to achieve long-term substance withdrawal.

A person can become dependent on illegal drugs, which is well known, but also on legal ones when they are used for a medical need or for less acceptable reasons. However, the behavior or activity associated with obtaining and using a drug is likely to vary tremendously based on the legality and acceptance of that drug. Obtaining a legal drug to meet a medical need is often as unremarkable as going to the doctor, getting a prescription, and then going to the pharmacy. However, for an illegal drug or a legal drug used without medical need and for unacceptable reasons, the behavior or activity may include lying and stealing.

When a person with advanced cancer becomes dependent on an opioid drug such as morphine, his behavior is not usually considered an addiction. However, when he becomes dependent on, for example, heroin, steals to have money to buy it, and lies to family and friends about his whereabouts or what he is doing, then his behavior is considered an addiction.

At times, family members or friends may behave in ways that allow an addict to continue to use drugs or alcohol; these people are called enablers and may also be referred to as co-dependents when their own needs are intertwined with perpetuating the addict's use of his addictive substance. Enablers may make excuses for the addict's behavior or even lie to protect him from the inevitable consequences of his delinquent conduct. The enabler may plead with the addict to stop using drugs or alcohol but rarely does anything else to help him change his behavior.

A pregnant addict exposes her fetus to the drugs she is using. Often, a pregnant addict does not admit to her doctor that she is using drugs or alcohol. The fetus may become dependent and may develop serious defects as a result of the mother's drug use. Soon after delivery, the newborn can experience severe or even fatal

withdrawal, particularly when the doctor has not been informed of the mother's addiction.

With all the talk about drug abuse, drug dependence, and drug addiction it appears that alcoholism, more so than the abuse of any other substance, lies at the heart of this issue. This may be because alcoholism has been around for a very long time, because alcohol is readily available, or because alcohol is considered a beverage rather than a drug. The word *khamr* itself literally invokes, first and foremost, the meaning of alcohol, even though in its larger scope, it includes alcohol as one element in the domain of intoxicants and narcotics. For this reason, it is important to take a closer look at alcoholism, the contrivance of Satan.

In the United States, which is typically projected as the most civilized country in the world (and in history), nearly 8% of adults have some problem with alcohol use. Alcoholism is the most extreme disorder associated with alcohol consumption. It is characterized by excessive drinking, unsuccessful attempts at stopping drinking, and continued drinking despite adverse social and occupational consequences. Men are four times more likely than women to become alcoholics.⁶⁷⁶

Of the people who drink alcohol, at least 10% become alcoholics. People who become alcoholics have been regularly imbibing in excessive amounts over a prolonged period of time and have become dependent on alcohol. The amount of drinking that takes place on an average day before a person becomes an alcoholic varies widely, but it may be as little as two drinks for women and three drinks for men (one drink is equivalent to 12 oz of beer, 5 oz of wine, or 1.5 oz of liquor, such as whiskey). Many alcoholics are also binge drinkers, meaning that they may consume five or more drinks on many days and little to none on a few days.⁶⁷⁷

People of all ages are susceptible to alcoholism and other alcohol use disorders. Blood relatives of alcoholics have a higher rate of alcohol use disorders than do people at random, and alcohol use disorders are more likely to develop in biological children of alcoholics than in adopted children. Increasingly, adolescents are being found to have alcohol problems, with especially disastrous conse-

quences. Older adults develop higher alcohol levels in the blood per amount of alcohol consumed compared with younger adults. This tendency is primarily due to the loss of muscle mass and an increase in fat tissue that occurs in most people as they age.⁶⁷⁸

Alcoholism leads to many destructive behaviors. Drunkenness may disrupt family and social relationships; married couples often divorce. Extreme absenteeism from work can lead to unemployment. Alcoholics often cannot control their behavior, tend to drive while drunk, and suffer physical injury from falls, fights, or motor vehicle accidents. Some alcoholics become violent; alcoholism in men is often associated with domestic violence against women.⁶⁷⁹

Other alcohol use disorders may fall just short of the definition of alcoholism. A person can have a significant problem with alcohol use but be able to fulfill work and family responsibilities. However, the excessive alcohol use involved in these alcohol use disorders still exacts a terrible toll on the person's body, leading to many physical and mental health problems.⁶⁸⁰

Because alcohol is absorbed faster than it is processed (metabolized) and eliminated from the body, alcohol levels in the blood rise rapidly. Effects can occur within a few minutes of drinking. Small amounts (for example, 0.5–1.5 oz of pure alcohol, or one to three drinks, resulting in a blood alcohol level of about 0.05 g/dL, or 0.05%) can act as a stimulant, often making the person giddy and talkative, and perhaps even boisterous and violent. Larger amounts (usually resulting in blood alcohol levels above 0.08 g/dL or 0.08%) depress brain function, resulting in slowed, impaired movements, unsteadiness, and sleepiness. As the alcohol is slowly metabolized, the process may reverse, such that a sedated person once again becomes agitated and violent. Very large amounts (resulting in blood alcohol levels above 0.30 g/dL, or 0.3%) can lead to coma and death.⁶⁸¹

The long-term effects of alcohol on the body are serious for heavy or chronic users. Prolonged use of excessive amounts of alcohol damages many organs of the body, particularly the liver, pancreas, brain, nervous system, and heart. Irregular heartbeats, polyneuropathy causing tingling and numbness, and stomach pain

from inflammation of the stomach lining are not uncommon. Impotence is typical. Alcohol also affects the immune system and hinders resistance to disease in general. Like many other drugs, alcohol tends to induce tolerance, so that people who regularly have more than two drinks a day can drink more alcohol than non-drinkers without becoming intoxicated. People who drink excessively over longer periods also can become tolerant to other drugs that depress brain function, such as barbiturates or benzodiazepines.⁶⁸²

Since alcohol causes a strong physical dependence, sudden withdrawal can have serious effects, and will cause death if the alcohol dependence is severe. Alcohol withdrawal usually begins 12–48 hours after drinking stops. Mild symptoms include attacks of panic and anxiety, confusion, trembling, weakness, sweating, and nausea. Some people develop seizures, called alcoholic epilepsy or rum fits. Heavy drinkers who stop drinking may develop alcoholic hallucinosis, in which they hear voices that seem accusatory and threatening, causing apprehension and terror. Alcoholic hallucinosis may last for days and can be controlled with anti-psychotic drugs, such as chlorpromazine or thioridazine.⁶⁸³

Delirium tremens (DT), a very serious set of symptoms, may result if alcohol withdrawal is left untreated. DT usually does not begin immediately, rather, it appears about 2–10 days after the drinking stops. In DT, the person is initially anxious and later develops increasing confusion, sleeplessness, nightmares, excessive sweating, and profound depression. The pulse rate tends to speed up and fever typically develops. The episode may escalate to include fleeting hallucinations, illusions that arouse fear and restlessness, and disorientation with visual hallucinations that may incite terror. Objects seen in dim light may be particularly terrifying, and the person becomes extremely confused. The floor may seem to move, the walls to fall, or the room to rotate. As the delirium progresses, the hands develop a persistent tremor that sometimes extends to the head and body, and most people become severely uncoordinated. DT can be fatal, particularly when untreated.⁶⁸⁴

Other problems are directly related to the toxic effects of alcohol on the brain and liver. Prolonged use of excessive amounts of

alcohol can lead to alcoholic liver disease. An alcohol-damaged liver is less able to rid the body of toxic substances, which can cause hepatic coma. A person developing hepatic coma becomes dull, sleepy, stuporous, and confused, and usually develops an odd flapping tremor of the hands. Hepatic coma is life threatening and needs to be treated immediately.⁶⁸⁵

Korsakoff's syndrome (Korsakoff's amnesic psychosis) usually occurs in people who regularly drink large amounts of alcohol, especially those who are malnourished and have a deficiency of B vitamins, particularly thiamin. A person with Korsakoff's syndrome loses memory for recent events, it becoming so poor that he would often have to make up stories to try to cover up the inability to remember (confabulation). Korsakoff's syndrome, which sometimes follows a bout of DT, can be fatal unless the thiamin deficiency is treated promptly. Some people with Korsakoff's syndrome also develop Wernicke's encephalopathy, which is due to a thiamin deficiency often resulting from prolonged heavy drinking. Symptoms occur suddenly and include abnormal eye movements, confusion, uncoordinated movements, and a decreased ability to sense pain.⁶⁸⁶

Alcohol use disorders can lead to the development of a chronic tremor as alcohol can damage the part of the brain that coordinates movement (cerebellum), leading to poorly controlled movement of the arms and legs (cerebellar degeneration). It can also damage the lining (myelin sheath) of nerves in the brain, resulting in a rare disorder called Marchiafava-Bignami disease. People with this disorder become agitated, confused, and demented. Some develop seizures and go into a coma before dying.⁶⁸⁷

Drinking alcohol may worsen existing depression, and alcoholics have a higher likelihood of becoming depressed than do non-alcoholics. Because alcoholism, especially binge drinking, often causes deep feelings of remorse during dry periods, alcoholics are suicide-prone even when they are not drinking. In a pregnant woman, alcohol use can cause severe birth defects in the developing fetus, including low birth weight, short body length, small head size, heart damage, muscle damage, and low intelligence or mental retardation.⁶⁸⁸

Research into the matter and experience with efforts to reverse the condition suggest that alcoholism is curable; however alcoholics may never return to drinking after treatment. A physical detachment from consuming liquor is only the first step. Psychological dependence on the substance is profound, but self-help groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, it is said, have had a good rehabilitative success rate.

Since it begins slowly without remarkable signs and symptoms, dependence on alcohol is not easy to recognize. Friends and family are more likely to notice the first changes in the personality of a near one affected by alcohol dependence, but embarrassment and denial often mask the problem. Denial is strongly symptomatic of addiction and greatly hinders treatment.⁶⁸⁹ Alcoholism becomes most obvious when drinking becomes heavier, starts earlier in the day, or involves bingeing as the level of tolerance increases. Many addicts drink secretly in an attempt to avoid admitting to, or confronting the problem. Often, performance levels fall and cause problems at work. Although tolerance levels increase with the amount of alcohol consumed, the lethal dose remains the same (5–8 g/kg of body weight).⁶⁹⁰

Cravings for alcohol increase with poor nutrition and inadequate nutrients. Alcohol is often used as a substitute for food. The sugar content of wines and beers is very high, causing reactive hypoglycemia and food cravings, especially for sweets. These factors cause mood swings and other problems such as insomnia. Poor nutrition further disables the body's ability to protect itself from the toxic effects of alcohol. Narcotics in general reduce the minerals in the body, especially magnesium and calcium. Even if nutrition is good, alcohol is a direct cause of vitamin deficiencies, especially of the B vitamins. Vitamin C, which actually helps combat the toxic effects of drugs, is also depleted with excessive alcohol use.⁶⁹¹

The underlying causes of alcoholism, like other addictions, are not fully understood. Alcohol use disorders involve heredity to some extent. Medical research suggests that people at risk of alcoholism are less easily intoxicated than non-alcoholics; that is, their brains are less sensitive to the effects of alcohol. Alcoholism tends to run

in families and learned behavior certainly plays a role in addictions, but several factors must be present for alcoholism to develop. Certain background and personality traits may predispose a person to alcohol use disorders. Alcoholics frequently come from broken homes, and relationships with their parents are often disturbed. They tend to feel isolated, lonely, shy, depressed, or hostile. An inability to deal with an emotional problem is often a trigger, since alcoholism is more likely to begin at emotionally difficult periods of life. Personality plays a role in addiction, although to what extent is unknown, and in this regard, self-destructive behavior and sexual immaturity have also been found to be characteristics. Peer pressure, emotional instability, and feelings of inadequacy and unhappiness are generally evident in addicts. Since teenagers and adolescents experience many of these emotional hardships, they are particularly vulnerable to substance abuse and eating disorders. Whether such traits are the cause of alcoholism or the result is not certain.⁶⁹²

The social acceptance of medicinal drugs and alcohol encourages use and dependencies. Nowadays, pharmaceutical drugs of all varieties are widely available to kill pain, induce sleep, and lift spirits. Advertisements promise easy solutions to complicated problems. Young women are praised for maintaining slim figures, even if this leads to poor health.⁶⁹³ Initially, only opium and its derivatives (morphine, heroin, codeine) were recognized as addictive, but many other drugs, whether therapeutic (for example, tranquilizers, ergotamine) or “recreational” (such as cocaine, alcohol, nicotine), are known to be addictive.⁶⁹⁴

Conceptually, *khamr* refers to all substances that impair the normal functioning of the brain and the normative consciousness of man. This would include *narcotics* — drugs related to morphine which, in the literal sense, induce narcosis, or stupor. In common parlance the term has been adopted to include all addictive drugs. Narcotics such as morphine, heroin, and cocaine are used illegally for the euphoric sensations they induce, and are highly addictive.

Cocaine, an extract from the leaves of the coca tree, is one of these satanic brews. It is said that cocaine was first manufactured in Germany in the 19th century. Today, most of the world’s cocaine is

produced from coca grown in Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, and Ecuador. Estimated annual production totals more than 215,000 tons, with most of the processing done in Colombia. It has limited medical application, mainly as a local anesthetic agent that is readily absorbed by mucous membranes (lining tissues) of the nose and throat. Both toxic and addictive, its use as a stimulant is illegal. Long-term use may cause mental and physical deterioration. Crack is a street name for a chemical derivative (bicarbonate) of cocaine in hard, crystalline lumps; it is heated and inhaled (smoked) as a stimulant. Crack, also highly addictive, was first used in San Francisco in the early-1980s. Despite the fact that its use has led to numerous deaths, it is still the fastest-growing sector of the illegal drug trade, mainly because it is less expensive than cocaine.⁶⁹⁵

Another substance included in the category of *khamr* is opium, the dried extract of the unripe seed capsules of the opium poppy, *Papaver somniferum*, which can be refined into several narcotic alkaloids, including morphine and heroin. It was used by many ancient cultures including the Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans for its properties of relieving pain, inducing sleep, and promoting psychological effects of placidity and well-being. Morphine is used medically to ease severe pain. Because of its addictive potential, its use is controlled in some countries. In overdoses it causes death by suppressing respiration. Opium and morphine are still occasionally used as an anti-diarrheal preparation.⁶⁹⁶

Cannabis may also qualify as an intoxicant defined by the general meaning of the word *khamr*. A preparation of the plant *Cannabis sativa*, it is widely used as a “recreational” drug for its euphoric and relaxing properties. Cannabis extracts are known as hashish and marijuana. The plant, also called ganja or hemp, is an annual (living for a year or less and perpetuating itself by seed) having narrow, toothed, spreading, finger-like lobes, and tiny green flowers in terminal clusters, with males and females on separate plants. Native to Asia, but widely cultivated elsewhere, it was a prime source of rope fiber, thread for clothing, and birdseed, but today it is best-known as a narcotic resin. Its most sought-after active ingredient, the cannabinoid tetrahydrocannabinol, was first synthesized in 1967. Historically,

cannabis was extensively used in medicine, but since the 1930s its therapeutic use has been mostly abandoned because of its abuse potential. However, the medical use of marijuana (cannabinoids) has recently become legal once again in the United States and other Western countries, especially as a pain remedy for athletes and those suffering from chronic pain, and as a suppressant of the severe vomiting that occurs during cancer chemotherapy. Until recently, the use of cannabis was illegal in almost all Western countries, but in some, particularly Holland and the US, it has been decriminalized and its sale is tolerated for “medical” purposes. In 1991, a receptor for cannabis was discovered in the human brain, and in 1992, a brain molecule that binds to the receptor was identified. This is believed to be the brain’s own “cannabis,” which may act as a neurotransmitter and modify mood.⁶⁹⁷

Though many drugs can be addictive, something as benign as food can also be addictive. Food addictions have gained tremendous attention in recent decades due to excessive dieting and the idealization of the perfect figure, causing serious health problems in the younger generations especially. These problems include eating disorders such as yo-yo dieting, anorexia, and bulimia. Endorphins — “pleasure” chemicals that help the body cope with a near unbearable condition — released by the brain are thought to be at least partially responsible for the psychologically addictive anorexia. Obesity also appears to be caused by addictive behaviors. Similarly, those who are obsessed with otherwise beneficial activities of life, such as exercise, work, and dieting, may demonstrate a semblance of addiction.

Sugar is a food to which many North Americans are addicted. It often replaces other more nutritious food and weakens immunity. A diet rich in whole grains, complex carbohydrates, and vegetables can help stabilize blood sugar and minimize the desire for sugar. Alternative healthy snacks include rice cakes, fruit, nuts, and honey. A “mild” addiction to the caffeine contained in coffee or cola is similarly common in today’s materialistic and discipline-lacking society. To minimize the throbbing headaches that typically accompany withdrawal from dependence on caffeine, it is recommended

to gradually reduce its intake. Satisfying substitutes for coffee are roasted barley, dandelion, and chicory.⁶⁹⁸

When Allah (ﷻ) says that addiction and habit-forming substances as well as gambling and wagering are of Satan's doing and that Satan seeks only to sow enmity and hatred among human beings, then the committed Muslims should be able to detect these meanings in all the self- and society-destroying effects of these vices.

Khamr, or substance use, among adolescents occurs on a spectrum from experimentation to dependence. The consequences range from none to life threatening, depending on the substance, the circumstances, and the frequency of use. However, even occasional use can produce significant harm, such as overdose, motor vehicle collision, and unwanted pregnancy. Although experimentation and occasional usage are common, actual drug dependence, so far, is not.

Alcohol is the substance most often used among adolescents. About 80% or more of high school seniors in the United States have reported trying alcohol; some engage in binge drinking, defined as more than five consecutive drinks, especially on class trips to the beach or spring vacations with friends. Whether or not an adolescent will try alcohol depends on certain risk factors, of which genetics may be one; adolescents with an alcoholic family member are considered to be at greater risk. Moreover, adolescents whose friends and siblings drink excessively may think this behavior is acceptable, and such affirmations are only amplified as society and the media often model drinking as being acceptable. Despite these influences, parents are generally the ones who can make a difference by conveying clear expectations regarding drinking, by setting limits consistently, and by monitoring behavior patterns.⁶⁹⁹

The majority of adults who smoke cigarettes begin smoking during adolescence. Nearly one-fifth of ninth graders in the US reports smoking regularly. If an adolescent reaches the age of 18–19 years without becoming a smoker, it is highly unlikely that he will become a smoker as an adult. Factors that increase the likelihood of an adolescent smoking include parents who smoke (the single most predictive factor), peers who smoke, and poor self-esteem. Using

other illegal substances is also a factor. In secular society, parents try to prevent their adolescent(s) from smoking by not smoking themselves (or quitting), by openly discussing the hazards of nicotine addiction, the physiological liabilities associated with inhaling cigarette smoke, and by convincing adolescents who already smoke to quit and to seek medical assistance in quitting if necessary.⁷⁰⁰

However, despite the best and most sincere interventions, the use of *khamr* substances remains high. In the year 2000, about 54% of US 12th graders had used illegal drugs at some time in their lives. About 62% of 12th graders reported having been drunk; 49% reported use of marijuana; 16%, amphetamines; 13%, hallucinogens; 9%, barbiturates; 9%, cocaine; and 2%, heroin. Use of methylenedioxymethamphetamine (Ecstasy), unlike the other drugs mentioned, increased dramatically in the last few years, with 11% of 12th graders reporting use at some time. Up to 6% of boys in high school, including a number of non-athletes, have used anabolic steroids at least once. A particular problem with anabolic steroid use in adolescents is early closure of the growth plates at the ends of bones, resulting in permanent short stature. Other side effects are common to both adolescents and adults.⁷⁰¹

Adolescents as young as 12–14 years of age may be involved in *khamr* consumption (substance use). Although there are risk factors for adolescents engaging in substance use, it is difficult to predict which adolescents will engage in the most serious forms of abuse. Concerned parents are advised to look for erratic behavior, mood swings, a change in friends, and declining school performance. Parents noticing any of these behaviors should discuss their concerns with the adolescent and his immediate circle of caring acquaintances such as neighbors, teachers, doctors, or Islamic scholars. If the latter feel the adolescent does have a problem, they can take the necessary measures for behavior modification and determine how to best wean him from the habit. Treatment for adolescents is similar to that of adults.⁷⁰²

All of the above details and much more pertaining to *khamr* center on the leverage of Satan against man, as opposed to some “natural” process, that turns “...you away from the commemora-

tion of Allah and from the *ṣalāh*.” And with all this information in mind and conscience, “Will you not, then, desist [from addiction, arrested development, and regression]?”

The market for illicit drugs is intentionally obscured from public scrutiny by those who manage information distribution, largely a partnership between the corporatized mainstream media and centralized secular government. Of countries that are infrequently mentioned, Russia and the United States may have between them around ten million users of opiates, narcotics, cocaine, and other forms of *khamr*. The combination of increasing demand, glorification by Hollywood, and the inordinately high street selling price makes for high turnover and windfall profits for the purveyors of illegal drugs.⁷⁰³

The total value of the trade is unknown because it is illegal, and because street prices vary widely. A United Nations estimate points to the total value of the trade in illicit drugs as well over \$400 billion/year — and this was at the turn of the 20th century. The way the international and national legal systems work — devoid of any moral foundation — the criminalization of some drugs does not seem to restrict the trade; rather, it just makes criminals out of the users. To pay for their addiction, many heroin users, for example, become sellers (creating new users in the process) and turn to petty crime and prostitution.⁷⁰⁴

The global trade in illegal drugs is worth twice as much as the motor vehicle industry. A small proportion of the world population uses illegal drugs, providing enormous profits in a multinational trade. Below are listed some worldwide estimates, circa 2000CE, of the number of users of an assortment of *khamr* materials,

1. amphetamine: 33.4 million users;
2. cannabis: 147.4 million users;
3. Ecstasy: 7 million users;
4. cocaine: 13.4 million users; and
5. opiates: 12.9 million users.⁷⁰⁵

“Therefore, obey Allah and obey the Apostle, and be vigilant; and if you turn away, then know that Our Apostle’s only duty is a

clear delivery of the message [entrusted to him].” Once people conform to Allah (ﷻ) they will then be able to obey Him. In other words, people cannot obey God until they have been socialized to conform to Him. And this is why the Islamic society was successful in ending addictions such as alcoholism and gambling as well as other social vices whereas secular societies have failed in this regard.

Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) qualified the range encompassed by the Qur’anic word *khamr*, “Every conscience-impairing or mind-marring substance is [considered] *khamr*; and every such intoxicant is prohibited.”⁷⁰⁶ When ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb stood on the Prophet’s (ﷺ) *minbar* in the presence of the latter’s companions and said, “O People! The prohibition on intoxicants has been revealed,” it was understood (during the Madinan revelation period) that intoxicants were basically fermented extracts of grapes, dates, honey, wheat, and barley.⁷⁰⁷ This would tend to mean that the following, among others, are unlawful for human consumption, that is, *ḥarām*:

1. ethanol (ethyl alcohol) – the kind of alcohol produced though the fermentation of fruits and grains as in wines and spirits;
2. methanol (wood alcohol) – alcohol of a poisonous kind, used as an antifreeze among other things;
3. spike or lace – alcohol (ethanol) secretly added to a beverage; an ethanol solution of a medicinal substance, called a tincture, is a matter of intellectual give and take as there appears to be nothing conclusive about whether these are totally *ḥalāl* or totally *ḥarām*;
4. faints or feints – leftover impure spirits from the distillation of alcoholic drinks, especially whisky;
5. snifter and snort – small drink of alcoholic spirits;
6. intoxicants, libations, and alcoholic drinks;⁷⁰⁸
7. indulging in or imbibing alcohol, whether in moderation or to excess; and
8. making, selling, and consuming alcoholic drinks.

The consumption of alcohol or any other substance that impedes the otherwise normal functioning of the mind and alters the everyday complexion of consciousness lowers the alert constitution

of human beings. This cannot be appropriate for an Islamic society, which prides itself on maintaining an energetic state of vigilance. The responsibilities and tasks associated with having an Islamic social order are inconsistent with the ingestion of *khamr* as it becomes a compromise, a menace, and a liability to this vigorous Islamic standard. In another sense, being under the influence of intoxicants, narcotics, opiates, and alcohol, and being addicted to taking the kind of risks endemic to games of chance such as the lottery or gambling are forms of escapism from reality. Gambling, betting, and the lottery, which can all become compulsive habits, are social attempts at acquiring wealth in an environment where social cohesion and social justice are virtually nonexistent, and where social security for the common man comes in the form of the “winning ticket” or the “high hand.”

As to whether the physical and chemical composition of *khamr*, in and of itself, is foul and nasty (*rijs*) — as is the case with *najāsah* (things that are filthy and odoriferous) — or the consumption of it is nasty and filthy is a matter of scholarly debate. Though there are dissenters among Islamic scholars to the first view above, this writer feels the issue is open to further social and scientific investigations before a definitive conclusion can be reached, if at all.

The *āyah* that prohibited *khamr* and defined it as filthy and foul (5:90) was revealed after the Battle of Uḥud. At that time, the people listening to this *āyah* entertained a couple of differing perspectives. One party among them felt sorry for the Muslims who had died before this *āyah* was revealed, because the latter would have apparently passed on with alcohol in their bodies. Some of them could not imagine how terrible it would be for a committed Muslim to die at Badr or Uḥud with alcohol in his belly. Advocates of the other perspective, having no good intentions, tried to confuse the public by arguing that this gradual implementation of Islam had caused deceased Muslims to die in a state of alcoholism, when they could have been informed of the substance’s true nature much earlier so as to be able to rid themselves of it and die without alcohol in their system. The answer to these questions, uncertainties, and doubt propagation came in these words,

Those who are committed [to Allah] and do righteous deeds incur no sin by partaking of whatever they may, so long as they are conscious of Allah [and His power] and [truly] commit [to Him] and do righteous deeds, and continue to be observant of Allah and to commit to Him, and grow ever more conscious of Allah [and His power presence], and persevere in doing what is better: for Allah loves the doers of good (5:93).

This *āyah* and the sequence of events surrounding it demonstrate that whatever has not been deemed prohibited, in the gradual work-up to prohibition, is allowable until prohibition is announced. Prohibition begins the moment the divine text expresses it, not before. Furthermore, there is no retroactive penalty in this matter. No one can be punished in the absence of textual material, be that in this world or in the following one. Those who died with liquor, alcohol, or intoxicants in their bodies before the textual prohibition was revealed are not considered guilty of a sin or crime, because during their lives they did not consume a prohibited substance — simply because the substance was not yet prohibited. They committed no sin, even if they were up to that point in their lives alcoholics or addicts. What is known about them is their high standard of consciousness of Allah's (ﷻ) penalties and their yearning for His rewards. They were actively attuned to His obedience, so much so that they gave their lives for Him. Their lifetime was replete with good deeds and hard work on a course to Allah (ﷻ), who was always on their minds and compassionately in their hearts. That being the case, how could anyone doubt their sincerity or question their character?

As to this other academic tug of war about whether *khamr* is foul just because Allah says so, or whether it is in and of itself foul and He simply alerts man to this reality, the whole matter wrecks of a human inability to understand that Allah (ﷻ) is divine and all-knowledgeable whereas human beings are mortals with limited and imperfect knowledge. It is important to understand that when Allah (ﷻ) renders something *ḥarām*, He knows exactly why He did it.

Whether or not He outlines why He did so is not man's business. Only the conceited and self-obsessed mentality thinks it has the final say on whether a proscribed item is prohibited because of its internal and intrinsic feature(s) or because of how it impacts people in the long run; or whether the whole issue of prohibition has some overriding social value that dwarfs the other considerations. The simple and undiluted fact is that Allah (ﷻ) knows everything, and obeying Him is mandatory; to enter into argumentation and disputes beyond this is draining and counterproductive within a committed Muslim's relationship to his Author and Generator.

The following list summarizes this long lesson pertaining to intoxicants, gambling, idols, and fortune-telling:

1. The prohibition in early Islamic history occurred during the third year of the Hijrah, after the Battle of Uḥud, which took place in the month of Shawwāl. According to most *mujtahids* the legal punishment (*ḥadd*) for those found guilty of intoxication is 80 lashes, however some say it is 40 lashes.
2. The lesson unequivocally declares that intoxicants and dependency are *ḥarām*; so is gambling in all its categories and classifications. There is also a prohibition on graven images (idols and other venerated objects) as well as soothsaying and prediction of the future. One of the practices along these lines that was prohibited was the pre-Islamic tradition of going to the Ka'bah and picking one of the sticks that were allocated for "decision making." If on the individual's stick was written "My lord orders me," he would proceed to his intended ambition. Astrology may also be included in this area.⁷⁰⁹
3. The Islamic prohibition on all intoxicants was a gradual, step-by-step process.
4. From the prohibition of *khamr* in the Qur'an, its portrayal therein as *rijs*, its caustic and disgusting description in the body of Islamic law, and the divine order to stay away from it, the common impression among Islamic scholars is that it is *najāsah* (noisome and abhorrent).
5. The prohibition concerning *khamr* was signaled by the word *fa-ijtanibū* (*desist*). This would mean that anything having to

do with *khamr*, that is, alcohol and drugs for the purpose of human consumption, is off limits (not the industrial uses of ethanol as a solvent or a fuel, for instance). Little benefit can be gained from the ingestion of *khamr*. Desisting from it means that drinking it, selling it, having body contact with it, and manufacturing medicine made strictly of it are all prohibited. There are prophetic quotes to this effect,

*Indeed, He who made its ingestion ḥarām made its selling ḥarām.*⁷¹⁰

*It [khamr] is not a cure; it is a disease.*⁷¹¹

Some *faqīhs* excluded the use of *khamr* compounds, poison, and even *najāsah* for medicinal purposes. Their reference is the *āyah*, “**Seeing that He has so clearly spelled out to you what He has forbidden you [to eat] unless you are compelled [to do so]...**” (6:119). This is corroborated by the hadith, “*Indeed, Allah has not furnished you with a cure out of what He has made unlawful to you.*”⁷¹²

6. There is a mutual opinion among learned Muslims that *khamr* may never become a commodity, or a market item to be bought and sold.
7. If alcohol (ethanol) turns into vinegar without an induced human process or interference with its normal chemistry it is no longer unlawful. Most of the *faqīhs* are of the opinion that a human or mechanical transformation of alcohol into vinegar does not render it lawful. Of course there are counter scholarly opinions on this very matter.
8. All games of adventure, risk, chance, speculation, and gambling that generate animosity and hate are unlawful, as well as those parallel floor-shows that detract from a heightened consciousness of Allah (ﷻ) and from the public and socially-binding *ṣalāh*.
9. Muslims who die before evolving laws become part of the social and civic framework cannot be held to the standards of

the future. Hence, Muslims who died before the prohibition of *khamr* cannot be taken to task because they did not abstain from it before it was declared unlawful. The same may be said about those Muslims who died when the Ummah was praying in the direction of al-Quds (Jerusalem) before the *qiblah* was redirected back toward Makkah.

10. All intoxicants are unlawful to ingest, drink, or inhale, in small quantities and in large quantities, in raw or in cooked form, regardless of what the original source may have been, grapes or otherwise.

The world that is teetering on the brink of its indulgence and habit-forming lifestyles is in much need of this light unto nations. These redeeming meanings are in demand by millions, if not hundreds of millions, of people who are slaves to their own lusts, dependent upon their own whims, and subjected to their own cravings. For it to have a chance at its own salvation, humanity has to break out of its bad habits. No constitution and no legal system will be able to offer people any relief unless and until they begin to remold themselves around their love for Allah (ﷻ) and His Apostle (ﷺ). After experiencing the warmth and security of this love, they will be willing to do anything that is required — from kicking bad habits to embracing death for the cause of Allah on a course to Allah (ﷻ). But there are media networks, political establishments, economic interests, financial priorities, and military institutions that stand between these liberating words of scripture and the poor human beings who see no way out of their corrosive lifestyles and their ironclad societies and governments.

Alcohol and the Malignancy of Aggression, Violence, and Crime

Looking at the destructive effects of addiction and dependency within the dynamic of substance abuse forces one to consider the elements of hate and enmity. The damage inflicted by Satan on life itself is expressed in the impairment of the individual as well as in the stultification of society. One need not read the Qur'an to realize how

destructive addiction, gambling, and alcoholism are to the psychological and social well-being of man. One of the cumulative outcomes of addiction and dependency, which begins with numbness and stupor, is a strain of hatred and animosity that runs through narcotics' addicts and abusers. There also seems to be a hand-in-hand connection between drug dependency and betting and gambling.

According to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency (NCADD) in the United States, the use of alcohol and drugs can negatively affect all aspects of a person's life, impact his family, friends, and community, and place an enormous burden on society in general. One of the most significant areas of risk with the use of alcohol and drugs is the connection between alcohol, drugs, and crime. Alcohol and drugs are implicated in an estimated 80% of offenses leading to incarceration in the United States such as domestic violence, driving while intoxicated, property offenses, drug offenses, and public-order offenses.⁷¹³

The US prison population has exploded beyond capacity (before the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, a subdivision of the US Department of Justice, was the fastest growing government agency) and most inmates are in prison, in large part, because of substance abuse: 80% of offenders abuse drugs or alcohol; nearly 50% of jail and prison inmates are clinically addicted; and approximately 60% of individuals arrested for most types of crimes test positive for illegal drugs at the time of arrest.⁷¹⁴

Because alcohol use is legal and pervasive, it plays a particularly strong role in the relationship to crime and other social problems. Alcohol is a factor in 40% of all violent crimes today, and according to the US Department of Justice, 37% of almost 2 million convicted offenders currently in jail, report they were drinking at the time of their arrest.⁷¹⁵

Alcohol, more than any illegal drug, was found to be closely associated with violent crimes, including murder, rape, assault, and child and spousal abuse. About 3 million violent crimes occur each year in which victims perceive the offender to have been drinking, and statistics related to alcohol use by violent offenders generally

show that about half of all homicides and assaults are committed when the offender, victim, or both have been drinking. Among violent crimes, with the exception of robberies, the offender is far more likely to have been drinking than under the influence of other drugs.⁷¹⁶

Alcohol is often a factor in violence where the attacker and the victim know each other. Two-thirds of victims who were attacked by an intimate (including a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend) reported that alcohol had been involved, whereas only 31% of victimizations by strangers are alcohol-related. Nearly 500,000 incidents between intimates involve offenders who have been drinking; in addition, 118,000 incidents of family violence (excluding spouses) involve alcohol, as do 744,000 incidents among acquaintances.⁷¹⁷

The relationship between drugs and crime is complex, and one question is whether drug use leads people into criminal activity or whether those who use drugs are already predisposed to such activity. Many illegal drug users commit no other kinds of crimes, and many persons who commit crimes never use illegal drugs. However, at the most intense levels of drug use, drugs and crime are directly and highly correlated and serious drug use can amplify and perpetuate preexisting criminal activity. There are essentially three types of crimes related to drugs:

1. use-related crime – these result from or involve individuals who ingest drugs, and who commit crimes as a result of the effect the drug has on their thought processes and behavior.
2. economic-related crime – when an individual commits a crime, such as theft and prostitution, in order to fund an existing drug habit.
3. system-related crime – these result from the structure of the drug system; they include production, manufacture, transportation, and sale of drugs, as well as violence related to the production or sale of drugs, such as a turf war.⁷¹⁸

Those with a drug use dependency are more likely to be arrested for acquisitive crimes such as burglary or shop theft, or for

robbery and handling stolen goods — crimes often related to “feeding the habit.” For example, in 2004, 17% of state prisoners and 18% of federal inmates said they committed their current offense to obtain money for drugs. There are also close links between drug use and women, men, and children who are involved in, or exploited by, the sex trade, many of whom are caught up in the criminal justice system. However, there is evidence that drug use is both a predetermining factor in such sexual exploitation and a means of coping with it.⁷¹⁹

More than one million people are arrested annually for driving while intoxicated, which is the third most commonly reported crime in the United States. Drinking and drugged driving is the primary cause of death, injury, and disability of young people under the age of 21, and nearly 40% of all traffic fatalities are alcohol related. Every day 36 people die and approximately 700 are injured in motor vehicle crashes that involve an alcohol-impaired driver. Drugs other than alcohol (such as marijuana and cocaine) are involved in about 18% of motor vehicle driver deaths, often in combination with alcohol.⁷²⁰

In 2007, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, approximately one in eight weekend, nighttime drivers tested positive for illicit drugs. Moreover, approximately one in eight high school seniors responding to a 2010 study reported driving after smoking marijuana within two weeks prior to the survey interview.⁷²¹

Four of every five children and teen arrestees in state juvenile justice systems are under the influence of alcohol or drugs while committing their crimes, test positive for drugs, are arrested for committing an alcohol or drug offense, admit having substance abuse and addiction problems, or share some combination of these characteristics. 1.9 million of 2.4 million juvenile arrests had substance abuse and addiction involvement, while only 68,600 juveniles received substance abuse treatment.⁷²²

Each year, more than 600,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking. 95% of all violent crime on college campuses involves the use of al-

cohol by the assailant, victim or both. 90% of acquaintance rape and sexual assault on college campuses involves the use of alcohol by the assailant, victim, or both.⁷²³

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics in the US, two-thirds of victims suffering violence by a current or former spouse or partner report that the perpetrator had been drinking, compared to less than one-third of stranger victimizations. Among spouse victims, three out of four incidents reportedly involved an offender who had been drinking. According to a 1999 study, women assaulted by intimate partners reported significantly higher substance abuse as well as other health-related problems. Of those women experiencing physical violence, 33% reported drug and alcohol problems, compared to 16% of those who did not experience violence. Domestic violence also has an effect on other family members. A study in Massachusetts found that children who witnessed abuse of their maternal caregiver were 50% more likely to abuse drugs and/or alcohol. Among victims of domestic violence, alcohol played a role in 55% of the cases, while drugs played a role in only 9% of the cases; for spousal violence, alcohol was a factor in 65% of the cases, versus only 5% for drugs.⁷²⁴

Though there is no “cause” of abuse and no specific profile of abusers, many factors contribute and make abuse more likely to occur. Pressures on the family, alcohol and drug abuse, and social isolation can all lead to parental stress and increase the chances that a parent will strike out at his/her child. Nearly four in ten child victimizers reported they had been drinking at the time of the crime. Among drinkers, about half reported they had been drinking for six hours or more preceding the offense. A 1999 study by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse found that children of substance-abusing parents were almost three times likelier to be abused and more than four times likelier to be neglected than children of parents who are not substance abusers.⁷²⁵

It is estimated that about half of state and federal prisoners in the United States meet the criteria for drug abuse and dependence, yet fewer than 20% who need treatment receive it. For many of the incarcerated, preventing future crime and re-arrest after discharge

is impossible without treatment of addiction. After release from prison, approximately 95% of inmates return to alcohol and drug use, and 60–80% of drug abusers commit a new, typically drug-driven, crime.⁷²⁶

Despite all of this evidence, members of the research community insist that there is no direct link between alcoholism and the tendency toward aggression, mainly because not all alcoholics and those who abuse alcohol (for instance, binge drinkers) are violent or criminal. To be fair to data collected on the topic, this is true. Corroboration to support this argument comes from, among many others, the “Alcohol Alert” of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA),

Scientists and nonscientists alike have long recognized a two-way association between alcohol consumption and violent or aggressive behavior. Not only may alcohol consumption promote aggressiveness, but victimization may lead to excessive alcohol consumption. Violence may be defined as behavior that intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, physical harm. Violence falls within the broader category of aggression, which also includes behaviors that are threatening, hostile, or damaging in a nonphysical way. This Alcohol Alert explores the association between alcohol consumption, violence, and aggression and the role of the brain in regulating these behaviors. Understanding the nature of these associations is essential to breaking the cycle of alcohol misuse and violence.

Based on published studies... the percentages of violent offenders who were drinking at the time of the offense are as follows: up to 86% of homicide offenders, 37% of assault offenders, 60% of sexual offenders, up to 57% of men and 27% of women involved in marital violence, and 13% of child abusers. These figures are the upper limits of a wide range of estimates. In a community-based study, [researchers have] found that 42% of violent crimes reported to the police involved alcohol,

although 51% of the victims interviewed believed that their assailants had been drinking.

Several models have been proposed to explain the complex relationships between violence or aggression and alcohol consumption... The direct effects of alcohol may encourage aggression or violence by disrupting normal brain function. According to the disinhibition hypothesis, for example, alcohol weakens brain mechanisms that normally restrain impulsive behaviors, including inappropriate aggression. By impairing information processing, alcohol can also lead a person to misjudge social cues, thereby overreacting to a perceived threat. Simultaneously, a narrowing of attention may lead to an inaccurate assessment of the future risks of acting on an immediate violent impulse...

Real-world observation [however demonstrates] that intoxication alone does not cause violence... Alcohol consumption may promote aggression because people expect it to. For example, research using real and mock alcoholic beverages shows that people who believe they have consumed alcohol begin to act more aggressively, regardless of which beverage they actually consumed. Alcohol-related expectancies that promote male aggressiveness, combined with the widespread perception of intoxicated women as sexually receptive and less able to defend themselves, could account for the association between drinking and date rape.

In addition, a person who intends to engage in a violent act may drink to bolster his or her courage or in hopes of evading punishment or censure. The motive of drinking to avoid censure is encouraged by the popular view of intoxication as a "time-out," during which one is not subject to the same rules of conduct as when sober.

A history of childhood sexual abuse or neglect is more likely among women with alcohol problems than among women without alcohol problems. [Some re-

searchers have] found no relationship between childhood victimization and subsequent alcohol misuse in men. Even children who only witness family violence may learn to imitate the roles of aggressors or victims, setting the stage for alcohol abuse and violence to persist over generations. Finally, obstetric complications that damage the nervous system at birth, combined with subsequent parental neglect such as might occur in an alcoholic family, may predispose one to violence, crime, and other behavioral problems by age 18.

Violence may precede alcohol misuse in offenders as well as victims. For example, violent people may be more likely than nonviolent people to select or encounter social situations and subcultures that encourage heavy drinking. In summary, violence may contribute to alcohol consumption, which in turn may perpetuate violence.

In many cases, abuse of alcohol and a propensity to violence may stem from a common cause. This cause may be a temperamental trait, such as a risk-seeking personality, or a social environment (e.g., delinquent peers or lack of parental supervision) that encourages or contributes to deviant behavior. Another example of a common cause relates to the frequent co-occurrence of antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) and early-onset (i.e., type II) alcoholism. ASPD is a psychiatric disorder characterized by a disregard for the rights of others, often manifested as a violent or criminal lifestyle. Type II alcoholism is characterized by high heritability from father to son; early onset of alcoholism (often during adolescence); and antisocial, sometimes violent, behavioral traits. Type II alcoholics and persons with ASPD overlap in their tendency to violence and excessive alcohol consumption and may share a genetic basis.

Spurious associations between alcohol consumption and violence may arise by chance or coincidence, with no direct or common cause. For example, drinking is a

common social activity for many adult Americans, especially those most likely to commit violent acts. Therefore, drinking and violence may occur together by chance. In addition, violent criminals who drink heavily are more likely than less intoxicated offenders to be caught and consequently are overrepresented in samples of convicts or arrestees. Spurious associations may sometimes be difficult to distinguish from common-cause associations.

Although individual behavior is shaped in part by the environment, it is also influenced by biological factors (e.g., hormones) and ultimately planned and directed by the brain. Individual differences in brain chemistry may explain the observation that excessive alcohol consumption may consistently promote aggression in some persons, but not in others.

[In conclusion] no one model can account for all individuals or types of violence. Alcohol apparently may increase the risk of violent behavior only for certain individuals or subpopulations and only under some situations and social/cultural influences.

Although much remains to be learned, research suggests that some violent behavior may be amenable to treatment and some may be preventable. One study found decreased levels of marital violence in couples who completed behavioral marital therapy for alcoholism and remained sober during followup. Results of another study suggest that a 10% increase in the beer tax could reduce murder by 0.3%, rape by 1.32%, and robbery by 0.9%. Although these results are modest, they indicate a direction for future research.⁷²⁷

The last part of this excerpt suggests that both petty and violent crime could be significantly mitigated by reducing, or perhaps even eliminating as a moral commitment to God, the consumption of alcohol as a pastime, or more significantly, as a form of escapism. Finally, what kind of monetary costs accrue to a society that has failed

at controlling alcoholism, addiction, and drug dependency? Substantiation in this regard and about how alcohol is the gateway drug comes from Kali Holloway in her article, “Forget the war on drugs: Alcohol ruins more lives than all other drugs combined,”

While our current political conversations often involve concerned discussions about marijuana’s imagined dangers or potential benefits (recall that the most recent Republican and Democratic debates both dedicated time to the question of pot legalization), our most problematic relationship actually seems to be with alcohol. America, it seems, has a drinking problem — and studies indicate it is only getting worse. There are real reasons, in addition to the pressing issue of mass incarceration..., for us to start thinking seriously about the cost of our increasing reliance on alcohol when we consider the ravages of drug use. Particularly since the toll of alcohol, though often left out of that conversation, actually outpaces those of every other legal and illicit drug combined.

Drinking is on the rise in the US. Precipitously. A study released this year from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation finds that heavy drinking among Americans rose 17.2% between 2005 and 2012. Not only are Americans drinking more, but in an increasing number of cases, they’re consuming those drinks in rapid succession. The same study found that binge drinking increased 8.9% nationally during the same time frame. In 2012, 8.2% of Americans were heavy drinkers, meaning they had one drink per day on average over the course of a month. An additional 18.3% of Americans that year fit the description of binge drinkers, defined by the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] as men who have five or more drinks and women who have four or more drinks in a single drinking session.

It’s women, by the way, who have largely driven these increases. In the years between 2005 and 2012,

binge drinking increased just 4.9% among men, but jumped 17.5% among women. The reason for such a significant rise is likely due to changing social mores... Men still drink more than women do, but women have narrowed the gap in recent years.

Binge drinking, always a favorite sport on college campuses, has also become more prevalent. A 2013 study from the Center for Addiction Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital found that women in college binge-drink more often than male students...

In big picture terms, the wealthiest and most educated people are most likely to drink. A Gallup poll released earlier this year confirmed that more affluent Americans drank more often than their poorer peers. "Whereas eight in 10 adults in these socio-economic status groups say they drink, only about half of lower-income Americans and those with a high school diploma or less say they drink." (There was a racial component as well: 69% of non-Hispanic whites say they drink alcohol, compared with just 52% of nonwhites.) The reasons for the class discrepancy are likely varied; Gallup theorizes that greater means lead to more frequent involvement in activities that involve drinking, such as going on vacation, dining out, and socializing with coworkers.

It also seems likely that the culture of overwork in professional environments contributes to heavier drinking. As office hours grow longer and the average work-week increases, so too does the need to blow off steam. Not to mention that drinking is ingrained in many office social cultures...

In a 2009 *New York Times* piece, Arthur C. Brooks suggests that goal-driven, ambitious people drink because success often feels hollow. Brooks writes that scaling the ranks "may initially relieve stress as people rise into the middle class, [but] it seems to introduce a whole new set of stressful problems for those who keep climbing"...

It seems important to recognize that while more affluent people drink on average, the consequences of drinking are often less severe than they are for poorer Americans. Researchers suggest this is partly because, despite drinking similar amounts, poorer people tend to drink to excess more often than wealthier people, who spread their consumption over more time. One study, cited by *Psychology Today*, found that upper-middle-class drinkers generally had 2–3.5 alcoholic beverages each day. “Conversely, people close to the bottom of the income ladder mostly divide into two extremes. Either they do not drink at all, or they drink to excess.”

But Diane Hietpas, of the Menominee Tribal Clinic in Keshena, Wisconsin, seemed to offer the most insightful take on the issue. “[P]eople don’t understand that this is a symptom of a much larger problem of poverty and trauma,” Hietpas told the paper. “Our people are hurting.” Following years of recession, war, and social upheaval, it seems likely that her statement has applications across socioeconomic groups.

The price of drinking is astronomical in every way. A recent report from the Centers for Disease Control [CDC] finds that binge drinking among Americans costs the country nearly \$250 billion annually in lost productivity in the workplace, alcohol-related crimes, and treatment for the health issues that result from excessive alcohol consumption. While the wages of Americans’ boozing have always been pretty high, the study notes that costs have notably increased in recent years. In 2006, the price of binge drinking for the nation was \$223.5 billion, the equivalent of \$1.90 per drink. By 2010, the figure rose to \$249 billion, or \$2.05 a drink. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the lion’s share of those costs, 77%, were related to binge drinking.

Of far greater concern should be the ways in which alcohol destroys lives. The CDC estimates that alcohol

was linked to 88,000 annual deaths in America between 2006–2010, while the agency found that 38,329 people died of drug overdoses in 2010. According to the Foundation for a Drug-Free World, alcohol is the cause of death for more American teenagers than all other drugs combined, and is “a factor in the three leading causes of death among 15- to 24-year-olds: accidents, homicides and suicides.” The *New York Times* reports that, on average, six Americans die of alcohol poisoning each day. Three-quarters of those who died were 35–64 years old. And 30% of Americans report that they’ve had enough struggles with alcohol at some point in their lives that it could be considered a problem.

Drinking is, in many ways, America’s pastime. But unlike other culturally shared activities, it often carries a hefty cost. None of this is intended to diminish the impact of a number of other social ills that desperately need to be addressed. Yet it does seem clear that misplaced fearmongering about, say, medical marijuana should be less of a legislative item than how we drink and why we drink, and how we can drink less.⁷²⁸

Dovetailing with this information, readers of this *tafsir* would naturally want to know about alcohol abuse and crimes on a global scale, such as war crimes and crimes against humanity. Does alcoholism (and drug dependency) have something to do with mass murder and genocide? Have those with a drinking problem gone on to become leaders who have held the fate of nations in their hands, who made the kind of decisions that have kept people in a state of misery and tyranny for generations, and who have been responsible for some of the greatest crimes in history? Did such leaders make these decisions while they were drunk? Below is a short list, which has survived the redacted, revisionist, and manufactured history commonly made available to the masses, of world leaders (chief executives, tyrants, emperors, conquerors) who could not control their drinking habits.⁷²⁹ If information on public

officials and leaders was freely available through a media that did not protect these serial violators of the public trust, many more could be added herein, not the least of which would be the royals of Arabia, who have been known to frequent the nightclubs and casinos of Las Vegas and Monaco,

- John Adams, US president
- Alexander the Great, conqueror from ancient Greece
- Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, founder of the Republic of Turkey
- Napoleon Bonaparte, French conqueror
- James Buchanan, US president
- George W. Bush, US president
- Winston Churchill, British prime minister
- Cleopatra, Egyptian pharaoh
- Benjamin Franklin, one of the US founding fathers
- Ulysses S. Grant, US president
- Vaclav Havel, Czech president
- Ferdinand Magellan, Portuguese conqueror
- Karl Marx, German ideological theorist
- Joseph McCarthy, US senator
- Nero, Roman emperor
- Peter the Great, Russian tsar
- Franklin Pierce, US president
- Grigori Rasputin, Russian mystic and advisor to the imperial family
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt, US president
- Selim II, Ottoman sultan
- Joseph Stalin, Soviet general secretary
- Tiberius, Roman emperor
- William the Conqueror, first Norman king of England
- Boris Yeltsin, Russia's first president

The above does not include the children of alcoholics, who themselves did not have an overt problem with addiction, but exhibited other major psychological and psycho-social pathologies as a result of the trauma of abuse. For instance, Benito Mussolini's father, Alessandro, was an alcoholic, and his biographers say that the

former grew up as a violent anti-social bully; so too was Adolf Hitler's father, Alois, who was known to be domestically violent and often mercilessly beat his son, but whether he did so while he was drunk is still a matter for historians to clarify.⁷³⁰

The Role of Jews in the Spread of Alcoholism

The Israeli-Yahūdī hand, which has been ubiquitous in the proliferation of corruption throughout history and in the rejection and perversion of the divine prescription for humanity, has been roundly castigated by Allah's (ﷻ) *āyāt* in this *sūrah*,

Because of this did We ordain unto the Children of Israel that if anyone kills a human being — unless it be [in punishment] for murder or for spreading corruption on earth — it shall be as though he had killed all mankind; whereas, if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind. And, indeed, there came unto them Our apostles with all evidence of the truth: yet, behold, notwithstanding all this, many of them go on committing all manner of excesses on earth (5:32);

And the [contemptuous] Jews say, “Allah’s hand is shackled!” It is their own hands that are shackled; and rejected [by Allah] are they because of this their assertion. No, but wide are His hands stretched out: He dispenses [bounty] as He wills. But all that has been bestowed from on high upon you [O Prophet] by your Sustainer is bound to make many of them yet more stubborn in their overweening arrogance and in their denial of the truth [pertaining to Allah’s power]. And so We have cast enmity and hatred among the followers of the [distorted] Bible, [to last] until Resurrection Day; every time they light the fires of war, Allah extinguishes them; and they labor hard to spread corrup-

tion on earth: and Allah does not love the spreaders of corruption (5:64);

Those of the Children of Israel who were bent on denying the truth [concerning Allah's active presence in men's affairs] have [already] been cursed by the tongue of David and of Jesus, the son of Mary: this, because they interactively rebelled [against Allah] and persisted in transgressing the bounds of what is right. They would not prevent one another from doing whatever hateful things they did: vile indeed was what they were wont to do! [And now] you can see many of them allying themselves with those who are bent on denying the truth [of Allah's power]! [So] vile indeed is what their passions make them do that Allah has condemned them; and in suffering shall they abide (5:78–80).

That the *āyāt* proscribing drinking, gambling, and other such ruinous activities come after warnings about how the people of previous scripture, specifically the Jews, failed the responsibilities of the covenant are less coincidental than circumstantial. There is an ongoing context here about how certain people come to reject Allah (ﷻ), His prophets, and the guidance they carried for the benefit of humanity. Hence, at this point, it would behoove us to look at the ways these Israelis and Yahūdīs profited from corrupting the societies they live in, specifically as it pertains to alcohol addiction. In his book, *The Jewish Revolutionary Spirit and Its Impact on World History*, consider what Professor E. Michael Jones says about Jews and the partition of Poland in 1795,

The Jewish longing for liberation from the Kahal and the tyranny of the rabbis became more than just a theoretical possibility for literary figures like Mendelssohn and Maimun during this same period [of] time primarily because of the partition of Poland, which took place in three separate events beginning in 1772 and ending in

1795. When it began, 85% of the world's Jews lived in Poland. When it ended 50% of the world's Jews lived in Russia, along the porous western border in a section that came to be known as the Pale of the Settlement.

Not long after the partition of Poland, Russia became aware that it had a Jewish problem. It had inherited its new Jewish problem from the Polish nobility who had used the Jews to do what they had no desire to do themselves. With the exception of tax-farming, all of the practices which had led to the Chmielnicki pogroms and the ultimate demise of Poland were still in place, now practiced by an unassimilated minority on Russia's crucial border with the West. At around the same time that David Friedlaender made his proposal for "dry baptism" to the German Lutherans, the czar appointed one of his most distinguished civil servants, the poet Gavriil Romanovich Dershavin to go on a fact-finding mission to the Pale of the Settlement and find out why the peasants from the greatest grain producing region in Europe were starving to death. In 1802 Dershavin issued his report. After traveling extensively in the grain producing areas of western Russia, Dershavin discovered that the Jewish vodka producers were exploiting the alcoholism of the farmers, "After I had learned that the Jews out of greed were exploiting the drinking problems of the peasants to cheat them out of their grain, in order to turn that grain into vodka, and as a result were causing famine, I ordered the distilleries in the village of Liosno shut down... I also made enquiries among the reasonable inhabitants," as well as among the aristocracy, the merchants, and the people living in the village "concerning the mores of the Jews, their business practices, their scams, and all of the tricks they used to... drive the stupid and penniless inhabitants of the village to the brink of starvation. I was especially interested in how it might be possible to protect these

poor devils and to enable them to live an honest and not disastrous life... to make them useful citizens.”

Dershavin discovered that the majority of the Jews made their living from distilling and selling vodka. Jews were no longer tax farmers, but they had a monopoly on alcohol production which when combined with usury was causing drunkenness and famine among the peasants. The Jewish vodka dealers had the bad habit of showing up with their wares at harvest time and selling alcohol to the farmers on credit. Before long the drinking habits of the peasants combined with the inexorable nature of compound interest led to a situation in which not only every bit of property was in the hands of the Jews but future harvests as well. According to a report from the Administration of Byelorussia, “The presence of Jews in the villages has a destructive effect on the economic and moral situation of the rural population because Jews... promoted drunkenness among locals.”

In other administrative reports, the same story emerged, “the Jews were the main cause of leading the peasants into drunkenness, laziness, and poverty, largely because of fact that they were willing to sell them vodka on credit (i.e., let them pawn their goods to get vodka). The production of spirits was an irresistible source of income for both the Polish magnates and the Jewish middlemen. The Jews not only cheated the peasants out of the grain they needed to live on, they also cheated them out of their seed corn, their farming implements, household items, time, health, and life... The Jews made a practice of traveling around in the fall during the harvest, getting not only the peasants but their entire families drunk, then getting them in debt, then robbing them of every last thing they needed to keep themselves alive... By cheating the drunken peasants and plundering them of their goods, the Jews plunged the inhabitants of the villages into deepest misery.” The Jews became an active,

irreplaceable, and extremely inventive link in the chain of exploitation that plagued this group of illiterate, defenseless peasants without any rights. If it weren't for the Jews this system of exploitation would have had no foundation in the Byelorussian settlements. "Removing the Jewish link," the Byelorussian report concluded, was the only way to break the chain of exploitation that held the farming class in alcohol- and usury-induced bondage.

Dershavin felt that the heart of the problem lay with the Kahal, the autonomous Jewish legal system, as well as the rabbinic Jewish leadership, which was determined to keep the Jews themselves subservient and isolated. "The teachers of the Jewish race" according to Dershavin, "distorted the true spirit of the faith with their 'mystic-talmudic' pseudo-exegesis of the Bible... They introduced strict laws with the goal of isolating the Jews from the other nations, and to awake in the Jews a deep hatred against other religions." The main problem was the talmudic Jewish religion, which "instead of cultivating communal virtue... turned worship into an empty ceremony."

The solution was education, especially in modern languages, because the ability of Jews to speak to fellow Russians would break the hold of the Kahal by ending the isolation of the Jews. Dershavin was hardly an obscurantist. In any other country — in America for instance, which would not see an educational reformer like this until the end of the same century — he would have been hailed as another Horace Mann or John Dewey. "Any Jewish reform in Russian," he continued, "must begin with the founding of public schools, in which the Russian, the German, and the Yiddish languages are taught." Dershavin was uncompromising in calling for the abolition of the Kahal, but so were many Jews. The Kahal was evil in his eyes because through it the simple Jewish people "are deceived into believing that between them and those of

other faiths an impenetrable wall has come into existence." As a result, "the darkness which surrounds all Jews keeps them separated from their fellow citizens." The Talmud schools were the main vehicle for the perduring and pernicious messianism which enslaved the Jewish people. In the Talmud schools, the Jewish people were kept in constant anticipation of the Messiah. They were also taught to believe that their Messiah by overthrowing all other races would "reign over them in flesh and blood, and will restore to them their fame and glory."

Dershavin concluded that the main reason for the shortage of grain in White Russia and the Ukraine was the Jews' exploitation of the peasants. As a result of writing his report, Dershavin was demonized as an anti-Semite. Because of his observations in Byelorussia, because of the conclusions he drew in his Memorandum, but especially because he praised "the sharp eye of the great Russian monarchs" which "prohibited the immigration of these clever thieves into their kingdom," Dershavin was demonized as "a fanatical foe of the Jews." Far from preaching racial hatred, Dershavin, like Catherine the Great, thought he could reform the Jews by reorienting them toward productive activity. In dealing with what he saw as the Jewish penchant to cheat people of other races, Dershavin tried to distinguish between freedom of religious conscience and "impunity for criminal behavior," and this involved a two-pronged attack on the problem. First of all, the Kahal was to be abolished along with "a ban on all previous involvement with usury." At the same time, Dershavin suggested that Jews should be given access to the university, where they could become doctors and professors.

The Jews retaliated by bringing false charges against Dershavin. A Jewish woman from Liosno claimed that Dershavin beat her with a club while visiting a vodka distillery there, causing her to have a miscarriage. In re-

sponse to an investigation into the charges conducted by the Russian Senate, Dershavin answered, "Since I only spent 15 minutes in this factory, I not only did not beat the Jewish lady in question, I didn't even see any Jewish women." After an audience with the czar, the Jew who had written the lying charges for his wife was sentenced to a year in prison, but ended up being released after two or three months largely because of Dershavin's efforts. Unfortunately, the czar was murdered in May 1801 before having a chance to act on the recommendations in Dershavin's memorandum.

Gradually, Dershavin lost his influence with the new czar, largely as a result of political intrigue. Eighteen months after the death of Czar Paul, toward the end of 1802, a "Committee for the Assimilation of the Jews" was finally created in order to consider Dershavin's Memorandum and to take corresponding steps. The big issue remained alcohol. The Jews lived in the same villages with the peasants and their prosperity was based on the exploitation of their neighbors' weaknesses. In order to ensure that the Committee's efforts came to nothing, the Jews raised a million rubles to bribe public officials. The main goal of the Jews' bribery was to discredit Dershavin as an anti-Semite and drive him from office. If that failed, the money was to ensure that at all costs the production and sale of alcohol remained in the hands of the Jews.

By the time the Committee held its first meeting, it was clear that Jewish money had done its work. In spite of the warnings Dershavin had sent to the new czar, it was clear that Count Speransky "was completely on the side of the Jews." Furthermore, "during the first meeting of the Jewish Committee it became clear that all of the Committee members shared the opinion that the right to sell vodka... should remain as in the past in Jewish hands." Dershavin's efforts eventually paid off in spite of

the machinations of the Jews. The law which was passed in 1804 specified that “No Jew... is allowed to sell vodka or to subcontract the sale of vodka.”

It might be more accurate to say that Dershavin’s efforts paid off in the short run. With the money they had made from vodka production at their disposal, the Jews continued to manipulate public opinion, portraying the prohibition of the sale of vodka and the order to move out of the villages as a terrible injustice.” Reacting to the incessant pressure of the Jews and the bribery of public officials that went along with it, Alexander I revoked the order banning the sale of alcohol. By now the figure of Napoleon loomed large in Russian life. Napoleon had set his sights on the east and had begun a propaganda campaign, originally conceived in his campaign in Palestine against the Turks, to portray himself as the spirit of Revolution incarnate and, as a result, the Jewish Messiah. Napoleon knew that he needed Jewish support to conquer Russia, and Alexander I knew that he knew that. So the czar was reluctant to alienate what was already perceived as a potential fifth column on his western border by depriving the Jews of what they wanted the most. In 1806 Alexander I convened another committee to decide whether the Jews should be resettled. In the end, the arrival of Napoleon convinced him to abandon both projects. Military necessity made the decision moot anyway.

Chaim Potok claims that Jews welcomed Napoleon as the Messiah. Solzhenitsyn claims that the Jews remained loyal to the czar after the war with Napoleon began. Looking back at the Napoleonic era, Nicholas I wrote in his diary, “It’s amazing how faithful the Jews remained to us, even risking their lives to help us.” During the war the Jews were the only ethnic group in Russia which didn’t flee into the forests to escape from the French army. However, in the area around Vilna, the

Jews who refused to be inducted into the French army could not resist the temptation to profit from the situation financially by provisioning the French army.

No matter how the Jews reacted, the threat of Napoleon coupled with the bribery of the Jews derailed Russia's first attempt to deal with its newfound Jewish problem. After 1814, the problem was compounded by the fact that central Poland became part of the Russian empire, adding another 400,000 Jews to the already large and unassimilated group living in the Pale of the Settlement. As a result, the Jewish problem in Russia became even more pressing and even more difficult to solve.

After the plan to ban Jews from the alcohol industry failed, Russia's next attempt to solve the Jewish problem involved resettling Jews on plots of land in New Russia on the steppes north of the Black Sea and training them to be farmers. The program exuded an almost American optimism about human nature along with a Jeffersonian view of the salutary nature of agriculture in an Enlightened culture. Russia, perhaps influenced by the success of the American Enlightenment, felt that it could turn saloon-keeping usurers into sturdy yeomen farmers within a generation. The program soon made contact with deeper, more intractable realities, most notably, the Jewish aversion to manual labor. P.I. Pestel was convinced that this early example of social engineering was a fool's errand because, quite simply, Jews do not believe in farming. "In expectation of the Messiah," Pestel wrote, "the Jews considered themselves only temporary inhabitants of the land in which they live, and as a result want to have nothing to do with agriculture. They also hold all forms of labor in contempt and devote themselves almost exclusively to trade." Farming involves lots of hard work. It is also something, as Solzhenitsyn points out, that can only be learned over the course of a number of generations and can't be forced on people against their will.

Before long, it became clear that getting Jews involved in agriculture was a hopeless cause. By 1810–1812, in spite of significant government promotion of the program, the Jewish colonies in the lands of the south continued to languish, because Jews were not accustomed to getting up early in the morning, nor were they accustomed to working outdoors in the cold. By the time they were ready to plant their crops, the season was so far advanced that frost would kill the plants before they were ripe enough to harvest. “The Jews waited until it was warm to sow their seed and by then it was too late.” In addition to that, “Farm implements were either lost, broken, or destroyed by the Jews,” and the oxen which were needed to pull the plow were slaughtered, or stolen, or sold. According to M.O. Gershenson, “The spirit of the Jewish people prohibits involvement in farming because a man who tills the soil is the man most likely to put down roots in a particular place.” Jews gave up the plow at the first opportunity in order to become middlemen and devote themselves to other more desirable activity. The hard work of farming was the bitter lot of the goyim; the fact that Jews did not have to break their backs while engaging in hard physical labor was perhaps taken as another sign that they were the Chosen People. Jewish women soon refused to marry farmers, or they had clauses added to their marriage contracts which specified that they could not be expected to do manual farm labor. Finally in 1811, in a tacit admission of failure, the government allowed the Jews of the Pale of the Settlement to get back into the vodka business and that cooled whatever interest they had in turning Jews into farmers.

Before long, government officials discovered that the Jewish unwillingness to work the land did not preclude a desire to take possession of the land and have other people work it for them. Thus, the government’s scheme to use agriculture to solve the Jewish problem

only compounded the problem by allowing the Jews to become landlords and forcing the peasants who were exploited by them when they were saloon keepers into a new form of bondage as servants and sharecroppers. The laws of Christian countries had always specified that Jews should be prohibited from owning land and having Christian servants. That law, as many papal fulminations indicated, was flagrantly abused in Poland, but now it was Russia's turn to learn the wisdom behind these papal prohibitions. According to Count Golitsyn, Christians who live in the houses of the Jews, "not only forget the commands of the Christian religion and don't fulfill them, but also take up Jewish customs and practices." The Russians viewed with increasing alarm the rise of judaizing among the Christians of western Russia following the partition. Czar Nicholas later worried that Jews would convert Christians because, beginning in the first half of the 18th century, groups of judaizers spread across Russia. In 1823 the minister for the interior reported on the "wide dissemination" of the heresy of judaizing and estimated at least 200,000 people were involved. A law was passed which forbade Jews to hire Christian servants, specifying that they should hire poor Jews instead, but the law was ignored. As in the case of alcohol production, the law was rescinded quietly after having been ignored. After 1823 Jews were allowed to hire Christian laborers legally. The "strict prohibition" against allowing Christians to work on Jewish farms "was in practice hardly enforced."

Once it became apparent that Jews were not going to become farmers, the Russian government sought a solution to the Jewish problem in education (as Dershavin had suggested); which was seen as the best solution to the isolation which the shtetl imposed on the Jews. The Russian reformers concluded that, in effect, the Jewish people had to be rescued from their own leaders, who ex-

exploited the Jews as ruthlessly as the Jews exploited the Russian peasants. The Kahal was the problem. "The Jewish priests, known as rabbis, hold their people in an unbelievable dependence and forbade them in the name of their faith to read any book other than the Talmud... A race that does not seek Enlightenment will always remain a victim of prejudice."

That was the view of a Russian official, but it was shared increasingly by many Jews, who were in many ways, the prime victims of the Polish Kahal, which functioned as the supreme judicial authority of what was in effect a state within a state. The Kahal was notorious for its corruption, creating in effect a two-tiered system which ensured that poor Jews would be punished for crimes that the rich Jews could commit with impunity. "The close relations among the Jews enable them to accumulate great sums of money for their general purposes, especially for the purpose of bribing public officials and to introduce all sorts of abuses, which are for the Jews." Or at least good for certain Jews. The rabbis promoted early marriage because they profited from it financially. There is even evidence from Jewish historians of the Kahal authorizing murder. As their contribution to the implementation of the czar's plan to resettle Jews to the farming lands of New Russia, the Kahal urged poor Jews to emigrate, but urged the wealthy Jews to stay where they were, thereby increasing the profit margin of those who ran the system.

The Kahal was opposed to Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment, from the moment that rumors of Moses Mendelssohn's ideas began seeping through Russia's porous western border. The Kahal was opposed to Haskalah because they rightly saw it as a threat to their power. "The Kahal did everything within its power to extinguish the smallest spark of Enlightenment." Giller Markevich wrote that the Kahal had to be abolished in

order to save the Jewish people from spiritual and social ruin; the Jews had to be taught languages, which would enable access to factory work, but they also had to be granted the right to conduct commerce throughout the country and the right to have Christian workers. Before long a consensus began to emerge among progressive Russian officials and Jewish “renegades” that the tyranny of the Kahal had to be broken. The czarist government was determined to fight against “Jewish isolation” and so promoted Haskalah without understanding that in promoting the Enlightenment that was the antithesis of talmudic obscurantism, misanthropy, and ethnocentrism, they unwittingly exposed the Jews of the shtetls to the revolutionary ideas that German Jews had been formulating as their response to the French Revolution. In unwittingly introducing the Maskilim to those ideas, the well-meaning Russian officials introduced them, as well, to the revolution that would eventually destroy Russia.⁷³¹

Similarly, with regard to Prohibition and the 18th Amendment to the US Constitution, well known is the fact that if one group could be blamed for having it overturned and the law repealed, it would be the Jews — not only Jewish organized crime but also corrupt Jewish rabbis who never miss an opportunity to profit off the misery and addictions of the goyim. Jews and their involvement in organized crime, and how Prohibition came to an end have been covered to some extent in Volume 7 of this *tafsir*.⁷³² In the talmudic Jewish tradition, there appears to be religious sanction for Jews taking advantage of their gentile hosts without registering the slightest sense of recrimination or remorse. Having one foot in the synagogue and the other in organized crime does not seem to be a moral dilemma, except when the seamier side of Jewishness bubbles up into the media on the odd occasion,

Though [Jewish] bootleggers had little to do with the manufacture and distribution of sacramental wine [wine

that was permitted during Prohibition for religious purposes], within months of the Volstead Act's passage sacramental wine had become one of the nation's largest sources of illegal liquor, and consequently, the object of much governmental concern. As early as 1920, the New York State Prohibition administrator, perplexed by what seemed to be excessively large shipments of sacramental wine to New York City, hired a Lower East Side resident and former postal worker named Izzy Einstein to find out why 'there was such a remarkable increase in the thirst for religion.' Donning various disguises, Einstein and his partner Moe Smith effected the arrest of close to two hundred persons for allegedly bootlegging sacramental wine on the open market. Many of those arrested by Einstein were in fact rabbis who knowingly violated the Volstead Act. In need of money, some rabbis let themselves be talked into "certifying" bogus rabbis, for which service they received a handsome sum; rabbis were also known to have sold their legitimately acquired wine permits to bootleggers. In one famous episode, a clergyman named S. Margolies traded on the similarity between his own name and that of the leading Orthodox rabbi, Moses Z. Margolies, by fabricating a religious organization which he named the Association of Hebrew Orthodox Rabbis of America, a title easily confused with the Union of Orthodox Rabbis (Agudath Harabonim). Margolies' association received wine for some seventy congregations simply on the strength of its letterhead until Einstein unmasked it as a fraud.

In other instances, the two rum sleuths found rabbis claiming their synagogues had over a thousand members when in reality they had no more than a hundred; rabbis presiding over congregations whose members bore names like Sullivan, Moriarty, and Wilson; and rabbis forming synagogues whose sole purpose was the acquisition and distribution of wine; these were popularly called "wine

synagogues.” “Gentiles staging celebrations at their home,” reported one contemporary, “pridefully offered their guests wine from bottles marked with a Hebraic inscription.” In California, where abuses of the sacramental wine privilege were also widespread, the growth in the number of synagogues would have startled even the most ardent believer in the strength of Judaism. A small Oakland congregation, barely able to assemble the necessary prayer quorum, suddenly found itself overwhelmed with members; that many of those seeking admission to the synagogue lived several hundred miles away and that some were even black seemed to matter hardly at all. Other synagogues went still further in their religious zeal and enlisted persons long since dead as new members. Of course, not all congregations were “wine synagogues,” nor were all rabbis involved in shady bootlegging deals; often innocent rabbis became the unwitting accomplices to bootlegging schemes. In one well-publicized instance, a Lower East Side, foreign-born rabbi, unfamiliar with the “tricks of the trade,” authorized two wine dealers to serve as his representatives to buy wine for his small congregation. Without the rabbi’s permission or knowledge, the two sold his written authorization to a bootlegger for one thousand dollars.⁷³³

African Americans from the “projects” also proffer evidence on how the misery and poverty of tenement slums subsidize the mega-profits of Jewish-owned liquor stores that happen to be conveniently situated on every street corner of the ghettos in US inner cities. Far be it for the owners of these legalized extortion rackets to spend their basketfuls of cash on programs and treatment centers that would have a chance of liberating the addicted from the elixir of death so that they could be productive and independent contributors to society. No, they would rather burnish their already bursting bank accounts with these ill-gotten gains so that they can be seen in swanky cars and palatial mansions in the best part of

town, where there is no space for alkie and junkies, and so that they can bribe public officials into looking the other way while they continue to monopolize the sale and distribution of something that is fed by addiction, vulnerability, and madness.

No wonder that this Yahūdī-Israeli mindset cannot countenance Muslims having their own society and leadership, and Islam dictating the direction the world ought to be moving in. They would be handcuffed in that world as there would be no market for two of their key profiteering rackets: alcohol (bootlegging cum drug trafficking) and gambling (Wall Street cum capitalism).

Muslims Passed the Tests that Banū Isrā'īl Failed

The good fellowship of these developing *āyāt* moves further into what is permitted and what is not. Here, the Muslims who are in *iḥrām* (ritual consecration) during the performance of the Hajj or the 'Umrah are acquainted with the penalty for pursuing and killing wild (game) animals. And the Muslims in general learn about the rationality of an inviolable Sanctuary, the inviolable months, as well as the garlanded offerings. These have been designated "off limits" at the beginning of this *sūrah*. But all of this only makes sense when the committed Muslims' reference point is their *taqwā* of Allah (ﷻ) — their constant precaution against the corrective power of Allah's justice — against which all other things can be evaluated,

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Most certainly Allah will try you by means of game [animals] that may come within the reach of your hands and your weapons [while you are on pilgrimage], so that Allah might mark out those who fear Him although He is beyond the reach of human perception. And as for him who, after all this, transgresses the bounds of what is right, grievous suffering awaits him!

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Kill no game [beasts of the field] while you are in the state of

pilgrimage [*iḥrām*]. And whoever of you kills it intentionally, [shall make] amends in cattle equivalent to what he has killed — with two persons of probity giving their judgement thereon — to be brought as an offering to the Ka'bah; or else he may atone for his sin by feeding the needy, or by the equivalent thereof in fasting: [this], in order that he taste the full gravity of his deed, [while] Allah shall have effaced the past. But whoever does it again, Allah will inflict His retribution on him: for Allah is almighty, an avenger of evil.

Lawful to you is all water-game, and what the sea brings forth, as a provision for you [who are settled] as well as for travelers, although you are forbidden to hunt on land while you are in the state of pilgrimage. And be conscious of Allah [and His power presence], unto whom you shall be gathered.

Allah has rendered the Ka'bah, the Inviolable Temple, a platform for all mankind; and [so, too], the sacred month [of pilgrimage] and the garlanded offerings [are symbols] meant to make you aware that Allah is alert to all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth, and that Allah has full knowledge of everything. Know that Allah is severe in retribution — and that Allah is much-forgiving, merciful.

No more is the Apostle bound to do than deliver the message [entrusted to him]: and Allah knows all that you do openly, and all that you would conceal. Say, "There is no comparison between the bad things and the good things, even though very many of the bad things may appeal to you. Be, then, conscious of Allah [and His power], O you who are endowed with insight, so that you might become successful (5:94-100).

Remember that at the beginning of this *sūrah* Allah (ﷻ) says to the committed and conscientious Muslims,

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Be true to your covenants! Lawful to you is the [flesh of every] beast that feeds on plants, save what is mentioned to you [hereinafter] — but you are not allowed to hunt while you are in the state of pilgrimage. Behold, Allah ordains in accordance with His will. O you who are committed [to Allah]! Offend not against the symbols set up by Allah, nor against the sacred month [of pilgrimage], nor against the garlanded offerings, nor against those who flock to the Inviolable Temple, seeking favor with their Sustainer and His goodly acceptance; and [only] after your pilgrimage is over are you free to hunt (5:1–2).

This makes it clear that hunting during the time of Hajj and ‘Umrah is unlawful. And now, He further qualifies His earlier statement with the following, “O you who are committed [to Allah]! Most certainly Allah will test you by means of the game that may come within the reach of your hands and your weapons [while you are on pilgrimage]...” The “test” here concerns committed Muslims who are in need of meat and nourishment; it also refers to the temptation to hunt because of the abundance of animals and beasts that are in easy reach of those in and around Makkah; and finally this “test” could refer to the temptation to hunt these animals and eat them away from the public eye. The words “**within the reach of your hands**” may refer to small animals such as chickens and domestic fowl, and the words “[**within the reach of**] **your weapons**” may be in reference to prowling and wild animals.⁷³⁴

It is said that this *āyah* was revealed during ‘Umrah al-Ḥudaybiyah when birds and animals were swarming and streaming all around the committed Muslims.⁷³⁵ In these tempting and enticing circumstances they were told that hunting during the major and minor pilgrimage is unlawful. What needs to be understood here is that hunting becomes more attractive when people are on a journey. The meat is tasty and scrumptious, the long journey to Makkah from Madinah making it more so, and then when this de-

licious meat is within hand's reach, hunting it becomes more appealing. Therefore, doing without something that is easily obtainable is more rewarding than doing without something that is very difficult to obtain. The fear of Allah's (ﷻ) power presence in a person's mind and heart is demonstrated at the time that person refuses to sin against Allah (ﷻ) when it is relatively easy. An excellent demonstration of this point is the experience of Prophet Yūsuf (ﷺ) who could have easily satisfied his lust when the "first lady" of the land closed the doors and in a very private manner said to him, "I am yours...,"

And [it so happened that] she in whose house he was living [conceived a passion for him and] sought to make him yield himself unto her; and she bolted the doors and said, "Come to me!" [But Yūsuf] answered, "May Allah preserve me! Behold, goodly has my master made my stay [in this house]! Verily, to no good end come they who do [such] wrong!" And, indeed, she desired him, and he desired her; [and he would have succumbed] had he not seen [in this temptation] an evidence of his Sustainer's truth: thus [We willed it to be] in order that We might avert from him all evil and all deeds of abomination — for, behold, he was truly one of Our straightforward subjects (12:23–24).

One's virtuous behavior in a circumstance like this, as he overcomes his physical desire for gratification, proves he is with Allah (ﷻ).

In other words this *āyah* is telling committed Muslims that Allah (ﷻ) will test them by making available to them abundant animals that are easy to hunt down at a time when they are prohibited from killing them, "So that Allah may distinguish those who fear Him although He is beyond the reach of human perception." Sometimes it is better to deny the appetite for what is pleasurable and delectable, even as it is otherwise *ḥalāl* and present in great quantity. When Muslims commit themselves to Allah (ﷻ) they obey Him publicly and privately, even though He is beyond their

sensual detection, but nonetheless aware of them. Once they prove themselves through this means they gain recognition from Allah (ﷻ) as well as His reinforcements and tributes. In a similar manner, He knows those who will not live up to their word with Him; He knows what they will do, even before they do it. But the record registers human action through the free will of man and thus man is the one who has to prove who he is “for the record,” **“And as for him who, after all this, transgresses the bounds of what is right — grievous sufferings awaits him!”** Transgression here means hunting at a place and a time when it is against Allah’s (ﷻ) law to do so.

Natural and social circumstances sometimes converge to act as temptation magnets upon human nature. This is the time that human beings need to prove that their moral character can control the errant temptations of mind and body. Temptation, enticement, desire, influence by exciting hope or desire — all these are tests folded into time periods in human life. And when the Muslims know that Allah (ﷻ) has spoken His word, they have no option other than to listen and obey. This was the Achilles’ heel of Banū Isrā’īl as they pleaded with Moses (ﷺ) to set aside a day for rest and recuperation, and for prayer and contemplation so that they would not be distracted by worldly interests and mundane affairs. Hence, they were given the Sabbath. But when the waves of the sea were abundant on the Sabbath with schools of fish, which they could see with their own eyes, and not on the other days of the week, Banū Isrā’īl could not resist the temptation to fish on the day they themselves had requested for devotion to God. They were in a quandary: how could they keep their Sabbath (that is, not engage in any material activities) on that very day when the fish were most plentiful. And, as the Qur’an relates, they could not keep their Sabbath, they could not honor their word with God, and so they, in their sly and crafty way, concocted whatever semantic rationalizations they needed to dodge the meaning and practice of the Sabbath. In their self-delusion, they would cast their nets on Saturday (presumably the nets would have been cast on Friday before sundown) and not literally and physically pull the nets out of the water; then they would wait until the Sabbath was over and at

that time pull out their nets full of fish. The *āyāt* revealed to Muhammad (ﷺ) record this Yahūdī trick for posterity,

And ask them about the town that stood by the sea: how its people would profane the Sabbath whenever their fish came to them, breaking the water's surface, on a day on which they ought to have kept the Sabbath — because they [the fish] would not come to them [the Israelis] on other than Sabbath-days! Thus did We try them by means of their [own] iniquitous doings (7:163).

This is the type of test that tempts people of God to prefer worldly gains over divine commitment. Both the Israelis and the Muslims were subjected to it, the contrast being that the former failed while the latter succeeded. The Yahūd were not able to keep God's company, but the Muslims, by and large, remained with Him. It is because of their simultaneous preference for Allah (ﷻ) and antipathy to the material attractions of this world that the Muslims could never have been considered slaves of their lusts and leisure; and so He describes such of His adherents,

You are indeed the best Ummah that has ever interacted with people for [the good of] mankind: you command the self-evident probity and you annul the self-evident falsity and you commit yourselves to Allah. Now if the followers of earlier revelation had attained to [this kind of] faith, it would have been for their own good; [but only] few among them are committed, while most of them are iniquitous (3:110).

A fact that pleases the Muslims and irritates the Yahūd is that in similar issues of life the former thrived whereas the latter withered. This is not an easy thing to dismiss and no one should behave as if this contrast does not exist. When both the Muslims and the Yahūd were faced with equivalent *balā'* (test and trial), it was the Muslims who passed the test while the Yahūd were AWOL. The

consequence was that Allah (ﷻ) took the responsibility of being His beneficiary (*khilāfah*) from the Children of Israel and reassigned it to Muslims of certitude and commitment. The Muslims of this character and quality accomplished what no other civil society in history could for the progress and enhancement of humanity. For the first time in the history of scripture on earth, the revealed word and the Prophet (ﷺ) brought to full fruition the social and legal range of scripture as its moral and high-principled preconditions were being fulfilled. Scripture and prophet came alive in a way that had never happened before. Islam had now become a global pattern rather than a local affair as was the case with all the preceding struggles of the Prophets and Apostles of Allah (ﷻ).

All of this really happened — before the Muslims unfortunately fell into the secular fixation that caused them to relinquish their ideological base and then surrender to a colonialist and Zionist re-definition of Islam, reducing it to a religion in the godless vocabulary of official Europe and executive America. This is not a trivial issue: the long history of scripture, the extended struggle of Prophets (ﷻ), and man's balanced relationship with God have been bequeathed to honest and ego-effacing Muslims. This places the committed Muslims in a position to lead mankind with grace and to offer humanity an alternative to the in-vogue, trial-and-error ideologies of national socialism, Marxism-Leninism, and corporate capitalism. Offering direction to the world, as committed Muslims should be doing, cannot be accomplished when Islam itself in the minds of its claimers is in the image of a secular Christianity and an atheistic Judaism.

Muslims have been placed in this front-line position “...so that Allah might tell apart those who fear Him although He is beyond the reach of human sensation.” The hope-and-fear relationship with Allah (ﷻ) is the cornerstone of the Islamic consciousness; it is the backbone of any social movement striving to live up to His standards. This area of activity is where the Muslims need to relocate their sensitive hearts and their sharp minds.

People cannot see Allah (ﷻ) but they can feel Him in their own selves when they conform to Him, comply with Him, and con-

fide in Him. Allah (ﷻ), as far as humans are concerned, is *ghayb* (absent in the material sense). But humans have access to Him through their hearts — the locus of their feelings and intuitions. When Allah (ﷻ) comes into the core of their hearts they realize that they must do what is right or else face the consequences. This intense internal feeling and experience of God grows throughout life until it dwarfs the physical sensations of man. When Muslims bear witness to the oneness and reality of Allah (ﷻ) they equally bear witness to the triviality of their temptations, having transcended the sensual in the process. This is a tremendous shift from the material world and its enthrallments and captivation, that is, the world of Banū Isrā'īl. This is actually a paradigm shift in which committed Muslims are no longer under the influence of money, possessions, estates, profits, and the like. Their major, overriding concern is keeping company with Allah (ﷻ).

“And as for him who, after all this, transgresses the bounds of what is right, grievous suffering awaits him!” After all these details have been set forth, there can be no excuse for someone to claim ignorance, or to assert that no information on this matter had come to his knowledge.

All Life Is Sacrosanct at the Inviolable Sanctuary

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Kill no game while you are in the state of pilgrimage. And whoever of you kills it intentionally, [shall make] amends in cattle equivalent to what he has killed — with two persons of probity giving their judgement thereon — to be brought as an offering to the Ka‘bah; or else he may atone for his sin by feeding the needy, or by the equivalent thereof in fasting: [this], in order that he taste the full gravity of his deed, [while] Allah shall have effaced the past. But whoever does it again, Allah will inflict His retribution on him: for Allah is almighty, an avenger of evil (5:95).

This indicates that a Muslim who is in the state of *iḥrām* may not intentionally kill an animal as an act of hunting. If a Muslim unintentionally or accidentally kills an animal, then he bears no guilt or punishment. If, on the other hand, such a Muslim were to hunt and kill an animal by design, then his *kaffārah* (expiation) is to sacrifice an equivalent animal, that is, an animal of the same nature and value as the one he deliberately hunted down. If, for instance, a deer was knowingly killed and there is no deer to substitute then a sheep or a goat may suffice as a *kaffārah*; similarly, if a buffalo was hunted willfully, then a cow would be considered an appropriate substitute; and a camel could expiate the killing of an ostrich or a giraffe, etc.

Two competent and qualified Muslims may be the judges in such cases, and once the stand-in animal is sacrificed and brought to the Ka'bah, its meat, called *hady*, is meant to be distributed then and there to the needy and destitute. If there is no animal to be sacrificed then the two judges may decide that the *kaffārah* consists of feeding the poor and indigent people. The food to be offered has to be in the amount that is equivalent either to the market value of the hunted animal or the actual value of the animal itself. And if this is not possible for a lack of money and resources, then the person (the hunter during pilgrimage) has to make up for it by fasting. All of these details are to be found in the books of fiqh.

And why do these penalties apply to such cases? **“In order that he [the hunter during pilgrimage] taste the full gravity of his deed.”** The *kaffārah* in a sense is a penalty. The crime of hunting during Hajj or 'Umrah concerns a very sacred time and place in Islam. The people who used to hunt during the Hajj and 'Umrah in the eras preceding the revelation of this *āyah*, have all been amnestied. But as for those who want to continue with their traditions and customs of hunting during this sacred time and place, they should note that, **“...whoever does it again, Allah will inflict His retribution on him, for Allah is almighty, an avenger of evil.”**

Germane in this instance is that man has the capacity to exercise his power against beasts and wildlife. A man entertaining such notions is reminded that Allah (ﷻ) designated this time period and

vicinity as sacred, which means every life is sacrosanct. Anyone violating this standard will be held duly accountable. However, this proscription only pertains to land animals. Marine life or seafood, on the other hand, can be hunted during, before, and after a person is in the state of *iḥrām*, regardless of whether or not he is performing the major (Hajj) and minor ('Umrah) pilgrimages, **“Lawful to you is all water-game, and what the sea brings forth, as a provision for you [who are settled] as well as for travelers.”**

Lest there be any backsliding on the issue of land game the *āyah* reiterates, **“...although you are forbidden to hunt on land while you are in the state of pilgrimage.”** All schools of Islamic thought agree that a Muslim in a state of *iḥrām* may not go hunting. There are, though, differing opinions on whether such a Muslim may eat from an animal that was hunted by someone else. Again for those who are interested in some of these fine details, the books of fiqh are exhaustive on this topic.

All the fiqh notwithstanding, more important is to attend to how the *āyah* winds down, **“And be conscious of Allah [and His power presence], unto whom you all shall be gathered.”** Man can hunt beasts and animals because he has the power to do so. But he should understand that Allah's (ﷻ) power is the power to be reckoned with. Man does not have unlimited and overwhelming power; he is still subject to Allah (ﷻ) and His power. No human conscience, especially that of a Muslim, can afford to be inattentive to this fact. Besides, where is man ultimately going? He is on a course that leads him to an assembly with Allah (ﷻ).

A Brief History of the Ka'bah and al-Masjid al-Ḥarām

What makes “hunting” off limits is the security zone of al-Bayt al-Ḥarām (the Impregnable House), which is designated as such by Allah (ﷻ). The world may have its trouble spots, insecure regions, and war zones but al-Bayt al-Ḥarām and its vicinity are safe and secure — per Allah (ﷻ). Not only is the Ka'bah a secure area but certain months of the year (Rajab, Dhū al-Qa'dah, Dhū al-Ḥijjah, and al-Muḥarram) are also a secure time zone. In a world plunged into conflict and warfare this particular area in and around Makkah is where man should find serenity instead of fear, peace instead of hostility. This is the area of the world that is supposed to be teeming with love, care, compassion, and understanding, where people can go for sympathy, empathy, condolence, and solace. This is where humanity integrates and assimilates in the full sense of the words and with all their practical implications. The genuine nature of this place is reflected by Allah's (ﷻ) words,

Allah has designated the Ka'bah, the Inviolable Temple, to be a platform for all mankind; and [so, too,] the sacred month [of pilgrimage] and the garlanded offerings [are symbols] meant to make you conscious that Allah is aware of all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth, and that Allah has full knowledge of everything. Know that Allah is severe in retribution — and that Allah is much-forgiving, merciful. No more is the Apostle bound to do than deliver the message [entrusted to him]: and Allah knows all that you do openly, and all that you would conceal (5:97–99).

The Ka'bah and its environs are an area free of anxiety and fear. This applies to all forms of life: people, birds, animals, and even insects. The spirit in this regard is particularly heightened for the Muslim who has entered his or her *ihrām*. Beyond this, Allah (ﷻ) has designated a number of months every year in which fighting and killing are prohibited. These are the four months of Dhū al-Qa'dah, Dhū al-Ḥijjah, al-Muḥarram, and Rajab (the 11th, 12th,

1st, and 7th months of the Islamic lunar calendar). The sanctity of these months was honored by the Arabians even before Islam. This may have been one of the uncorrupted traditions that survived from the years of Ibrāhīm and Ismā'il (ﷺ). In these months people felt free of threats and panic, secure that no one would be seeking revenge. It was known that during these months even a murderer would be safe from retribution by the families of the bereaved. This constituted a time period in which people felt free to travel, trade, and venture into the world. Thus, the Ka'bah was meant by Allah (ﷻ) to be a shelter and a refuge, known for its peace and tranquility. By its very history, nature, and character, it is for all practical purposes a haven and an asylum. This is the way Allah, the Most High, wanted it to be. More than that, if certain animals have been designated to be sacrificed in the vicinity of the Ḥaram and these animals are to be imported from distant areas, then they are to be unharmed until the time they are sacrificed in the holy area during the Hajj or the 'Umrah. Even a person who pilfers branches from trees around the Ḥaram and then seeks sanctuary in the Inviolable Temple is considered protected and free from danger.

Makkah and the Ka'bah, since their inception, have been designated as safe havens and shelters: *mathābatan li-al-nāsi wa-amnan*. Even the *mushriks* are to be afforded protection in and around the Ka'bah. In pre-Islamic Makkah, the *mushriks* there enjoyed considerable stability at a time when many of the people and tribes around them in Arabia were defenseless, threatened, and under attack. However, what is more disappointing than surprising is that when Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) came to rededicate these meanings of peace and security, these same *mushriks* told him, in the words of one of Allah's (ﷻ) *āyāt*,

Now some say, "If we were to follow the guidance to which you [Muhammad] invite us, we would be torn away from our very soil!" Why, have We not established for them a sanctuary secure, to which, as a provision from Us, shall be gathered the fruits of all [good] things? But most of them are unaware [of this truth] (28:57).

The Prophet (ﷺ) said on the day Makkah was liberated,

*Truly, this town [Makkah] is sacrosanct; its trees shall not be cut away, its fruits shall not be prematurely plucked, its game animals [shall not be] driven away by fear, and no lost item shall be claimed except by its owner.*⁷³⁶

There are exceptions to this rule. Thus a person, whether or not he is in the state of pilgrimage, may kill a crow, snake, tarantula, mouse, or rabid dog. This is substantiated by the narration from Umm al-Mu'minīn 'Ā'ishah in which she said, "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) ordered the killing of the five obnoxious [creatures] while in the state of pilgrimage and while not: raven, serpent, scorpion, rat, and manic dog."⁷³⁷

Madinah has the same status as Makkah: inviolable and secure. This parallel status is based on a reference to a quote from 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib who said, "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, 'Madinah is a sanctuary [in the area] between 'Ayr and Thawr'";⁷³⁸ and from the hadith of Rasūl-Allāh (ﷺ) himself, "Ibrāhīm declared the sanctity of Makkah and prayed for it; and I declare the sanctity of Madinah as Ibrāhīm did for Makkah..."⁷³⁹

"Allah has caused the Ka'bah, the Sacred Temple, to be a springboard for people..." This *āyah* begs for more understanding. The Ka'bah literally is the cube or square block sitting at the center of Makkah and in the center of Muslims' hearts all over the world. Covered with a black cloth, it is situated in the center of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. One corner of the Ka'bah contains the famous Black Stone, but neither the stone nor the Ka'bah are objects of veneration; rather they represent a sanctuary consecrated to Allah (ﷻ) since time immemorial, and it is toward the Ka'bah that Muslims orient themselves in their daily institutionalized prayers. Thus the Ka'bah is a place that blends the hearts and minds of hundreds of millions of Muslims each day, it supports the concentration of consciousness upon the Sustainer of all.⁷⁴⁰

The Ka'bah is also called al-Bayt al-Ḥarām (the Inviolable House) and al-Bayt al-'Atīq (the Enduring House). The Black

Stone (al-Ḥajar al-Aswad) is in the southeast corner, set 1.5 m from the ground. In the opposite corner, set somewhat lower, is another stone of a reddish color called the "Stone of Felicity" (Ḥajar al-Sa'ādah). It is the center of the Ka'bah that marks the direction of the *qiblah*, the focal point of *ṣalāh*. Overhanging the roof on one side is the *mizāb* (rainspout); the foundation at the base of the Ka'bah is called the *shadrawān*; and the space between the Black Stone and the door leading inside is called the *multazam* (coherence). Around the Ka'bah is a restricted precinct called the *ḥaram* of Makkah, which, in fact, surrounds the city on all sides, in some directions as far as 12 miles (20 km). In this precinct, the taking of any kind of life, except that of noxious or dangerous creatures, is not allowed, and only Muslims are allowed to enter (not in the exclusivist sense of some group having an ownership of the Ka'bah, but in the inclusivist sense of those who have acquiesced to Allah's (ﷻ) command and counsel).

Some historical traditions suggest that the Ka'bah was founded by Adam (ﷺ), and after his death rebuilt by his son. When the time came, it was resurrected by Ibrāhīm and his son Ismā'il (ﷺ). It is said that this incarnation of the Ka'bah was built without a roof, but with doors at ground level on the east and the west sides. When it was finished, Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) was commanded by God to go to nearby Mt. Thābir and call mankind to pilgrimage to al-Bayt al-'Atīq,

For, when We assigned to Ibrāhīm the site of this Temple, [We said to him], "Do not ascribe divinity/authority to any beside Me," and, "Purify My Temple for those who will walk around it, and those who will stand before it [in meditation], and those who will bow down and prostrate themselves [in prayer]."

Hence, [O Muhammad], proclaim to all people the [duty of] pilgrimage: they will come to you on foot and on every [kind of] fast mount, coming from every far-away point [on earth], so that they might experience much that shall be of benefit to them, and that they might extol the name of Allah on the days appointed [for

sacrifice], over whatever heads of cattle He may have provided for them [to this end]: eat, then, thereof, and feed the unfortunate poor. Thereafter let them bring to an end their state of self-denial, and let them fulfill the vows they [may] have made, and let them walk [once again] around the Enduring Temple (22:26–29).

Clearly the Ka‘baḥ has been built and rebuilt several times. Some narratives say that after Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘il (ﷺ), the Ka‘baḥ was erected again by the ‘Amāliqāḥ Clan, the descendants of Noah (ﷺ), and subsequently by Banū Jurhum, who also descended from Noah (ﷺ) through Qaḥṭān (Joktan, in the Bible). Several hundred years before the revelation of the Qur’an, the Ka‘baḥ was restored by Quṣayy ibn Kilāb, who had led the Quraysh to settle in Makkah. At that time, according to the historian Azraqī, the Ka‘baḥ, without a roof, was 4.5 m high, and there were venerated stones in all four corners.⁷⁴¹

Eighteen years before the Hijrah it was again reconstructed. It is said that a wrecked Byzantine ship in Makkah’s port of Shu‘aybiyāḥ provided the wood for the Ka‘baḥ, which was built in alternate layers of teakwood and stone by a Coptic carpenter called Baqūm. When the time came to reposition the Black Stone in its original spot, strife broke out between various influential personalities over who would have the honor of putting it back; the dispute became serious enough to threaten bloodshed. As if it were a sign from God, Muhammad (ﷺ) — then known as the “trustworthy” (*al-amīn*), and not yet called to his prophetic mission — happened to be passing by the disputants at this crucial moment. He invited the leaders of the clans to carry the stone by grasping a portion of the cloth onto which it had been placed; he then lifted up the stone himself and set it in the corner of the wall.⁷⁴²

After the victory of Islam and the Muslims, the two *khalīfaḥs* ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān both felt the need to enlarge the *masjid* (al-Masjid al-Ḥarām) around the Ka‘baḥ. They compensated the owners of the surrounding houses that had to be demolished in order to increase the circumambulation area (the

maṭāf). 'Umar was the first to build an enclosure around the Ka'baḥ, less than the height of a man, with gates and lamps, and 'Uthmān introduced covered porticos for *ṣalāḥ*.

Following the liberation of Makkah by 'Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr in 64AH (684CE), the city was besieged by the second Umayyad king, Yazīd; flaming arrows from Yazīd's army set fire to the Ka'baḥ, which was then destroyed. The heat cracked the Black Stone into three pieces. On examining the original foundation of the now demolished Ka'baḥ, Ibn al-Zubayr concluded that the Ka'baḥ had previously included the enclosure to one side (al-Ḥijr) containing the graves of Ismā'il (ﷺ) and his mother Hājar. He therefore rebuilt it on a larger scale, increasing its greatest length to 26 cubits (11.9 m) from the previous 18 (8.2 m).⁷⁴³ He also made it higher, raising it from 18 to 27 cubits (12.3 m), built it out of stone, and had two doors installed. The Black Stone was repaired and held together by a silver band around the three pieces. He brought mosaics and columns from a church in Yemen (originally built by Abrahāḥ, who had wished his church to rival the religious attraction of Makkah), using the mosaics for decoration and setting the three polychrome marble columns inside.⁷⁴⁴ In the tradition of the first Umayyad king, Mu'āwiyah, Ibn al-Zubayr covered the Ka'baḥ with black silk.

'Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr, who had declared himself the legitimate ruler in opposition to the Umayyads, was slain in 73AH (692CE) by Umayyad King 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān's troops, which were led by al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf.⁷⁴⁵ Al-Ḥajjāj for his part, disliked the changes that had been made and reduced the Ka'baḥ to its former size, leaving a semicircular wall surrounding the Ḥijr, and the Ḥijr itself, outside the Ka'baḥ. Further building was done by the 'Abbasid kings, al-Mahdī, al-Mu'tamid, and al-Mu'taḍid. Al-Mahdī extended the *maṭāf*, and added three rows of colonnades (row of evenly spaced columns), himself participating in the work. By 167AH (782CE), the Ka'baḥ had much the appearance it has today.

In 979AH (1571CE) the famous Ottoman architect Sīnān, who was responsible for many resplendent *masjids* in Istanbul and Turkey, began work on the *masjid* around the Ka'baḥ, the previous *masjid* having been demolished the year before on the orders of Ot-

toman Sultan Selim II.⁷⁴⁶ For the sacred al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, Sīnān created a colonnade of 892 columns, made of marble and stone, over which were set 500 arches and cupolas (a roof in the form of a dome). The interior decoration of gold designs and calligraphy was the work of ‘Abdullāh al-Muftī. The whole structure was completed by 994AH (1586CE): it had seven minarets and 19 entrances, and there was prayer space for 12,000 in the covered part of the *masjid*; another 24,000 could be accommodated in the open courtyard. In 1030AH (1620CE) floods swept away the Station of Ibrāhīm (Maqām Ibrāhīm), the lamps, and part of the Ka‘bah’s walls. Sultan Murad ordered extensive repairs which did not, however, involve any restructuring.⁷⁴⁷

From 1375AH (1955CE) a massive program of enlargement and rebuilding of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām was initiated and carried out by King Fayṣal of Saudi Arabia. In 1377AH cracks were found in the Ka‘bah and repaired, the first work on the structure since 1039AH (1629CE). The architects had originally recommended that the *masjid* of Sīnān be torn down, to be replaced by an entirely new structure. King Fayṣal thereupon called a conference of architects to discuss the question, who proceeded to make the same recommendation.⁷⁴⁸ To his credit, King Fayṣal insisted that the rebuilding and expansion of the *masjid* conserve as much as possible of the *masjid* of Sīnān; this was done, thereby saving this magnificent monument from demolition.

Considerably expanded today with two levels on which the ritual circumambulation (*ṭawāf*) can be performed, the *masjid* can now hold several hundreds of thousands of attendees at a time. The *sa’y* course (between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwaḥ), which until then had been outside the *masjid*, was roofed over and is now within the precincts of the *masjid*. The dimensions of the present-day Ka‘bah are: the northeast wall, 12.63 m; the eastern wall, 11.22 m; the western wall, 13.10 m; the northwest wall, 11.03 m; and height, 13 m (it is not a uniform cube). The door on the northern side is 2 m from the ground and is 1.7 m wide.

A new *kiswah* (cover or cladding) is made for the Ka‘bah each year; it is a black cloth with woven black calligraphic patterns, and

a band of Qur'anic calligraphy embroidered in gold thread around the top portion. The old *kiswah* is removed and sectioned after the annual pilgrimage and the pieces are distributed to pilgrims. The Ka'bah is then covered with a new *kiswah*; while it is being replaced a temporary white covering is placed upon the Ka'bah.

The incomparable 12th-century Sufi, Ibn 'Arabī, said that the Ka'bah represents Being.⁷⁴⁹ As the Adamic temple, it is the first temple of mankind; and as the temple of the last *din*, it is the final temple of mankind, the once forgotten sanctuary, the keystone. In Christianity, the end of the cycle of Adamic creation is marked by the symbolism of the perfect city, the descent of the new Jerusalem from heaven. The perfect city is a crystalline, geometric symbol from the mineral world, in complementary opposition to the organic symbolism of the beginning of the cycle, which is the garden, vegetation, and, above all, the tree of knowledge of good and evil at its center. Islam shares the symbol of the garden of the beginning with Judaism and Christianity, but its symbol of the center at the end of time is not that of the city, the abstract, man-made habitat that replaces nature, but of the geometric essence of the city, reduced to its simplest form. This is nothing more than a cube, the abstraction of a crystal, the cube of the Ka'bah. Thus the eschatological paradigm of the symbolic "squaring of the circle" is completed, or transposed; the sphere is made a cube, the perfect potentiality of the beginning reduced to the perfect completion and stability of the end. The juxtaposition of the organic and the crystalline is also prominent in the decorative calligraphy that is a striking feature of Islamic architecture, where the words of the Qur'an, the crystallization of divine speech, intertwine with floral motifs; the intellect intertwines with existence.

The Centrality of Makkah

“Allah has rendered the Ka‘baḥ, the Sanctified Temple, a lift-off for people...” This Holy Sanctuary was not meant to be the dormant, static, and reactive place that it is today. There are contemporary places in this world that have occupied the position meant for Makkah and the Ḥaram. Places like New York, Washington, Paris, London, and Tel Aviv, just to mention a few, have taken over the pacesetting influence on the global psyche. This role is reserved by Allah (ﷻ) for Makkah. But Makkah can only be as good and as lively as the people who belong to it. It is from Makkah that all people of the world should be receiving direction, vision, mission, and a sense of urgency. The word *qiyāman*, which describes the Ka‘baḥ and al-Bayt al-Ḥarām, means that Makkah by the words of Allah (ﷻ) is a launching pad, a political podium, and an economic shot in the arm for all people.

In times past, livestock, cattle, and farm animals were brought to Makkah to feed the hungry. Makkah is a geographical zone of security and a time zone of peace. Or that is, at least, what it is meant to be. People should be bringing to Makkah from all over the earth their excessive wealth, inordinate riches, and unreasonable fortunes, all the while guiding this abundance and copiousness into the hands of the needy and poverty-stricken people in the world. Makkah is supposed to have an impact on people, groups of persons far and near, bodies of citizens of states and countries on all continents, and the common people in general. If people were bringing to Makkah their *hady* and *qalā'id* in the form of domesticated bovine animals as well as desert animals many centuries ago, today they should be bringing in the same, but in the form of agricultural produce, vehicles of transportation, monetary instruments, etc. Makkah should be a place that attracts the destitute, offering them shelter; that opens its doors to the hungry, presenting them with food; and that receives the confused, giving them direction.

The city of Makkah, unlike all other cities, is by its very nature a “support system” for people who have voluntarily and amicably settled there. The reason why there are Muslims in Makkah is because they wanted to implant their hearts and their lives around

the Ka'bah; and there was no one to tell them that this was impossible and that they have to return to their countries, as is the case today with the Saudi Arabian nation-state. The centuries of Hajj and 'Umrah were channels for Muslim peoples from all around the world to come and live in and around Makkah. This Makkah melting-pot brought together people who felt an attachment to Allah (ﷻ) and His Apostle (ﷺ) more than to their cultures, clans, and whatever other group-solidarity they may have had. This world-wide human movement into Makkah gradually began to de-nationalize the integrated Muslims around the Ka'bah. In fact, Makkah became the live example of how it is possible for people from around the world to shed their "discriminatory differences" and live together. This is a partial explanation of Ibrāhīm's (ﷺ) words,

Our Sustainer! I have settled of my progeny in an arid valley [in Arabia], close to Your sanctified Temple. Our Sustainer! Have them demonstrate the uplifting effects of *ṣalāh*, thus allowing peoples' hearts to gravitate toward them and [I beseech You to] provide them with ripened green goods so that they may be grateful (14:37).

Allah (ﷻ) further states,

And they say, "If we were to follow guidance with you [Muhammad] we would be abducted from our land [Makkah]!" Have We not secured for them a sanctified Sanctuary to which the fruits of everything are brought — a provision from Our bearing? But most of them do not know (28:57);

Have they [the deniers of Allah's power presence] not seen that We have rendered [for them] a secure Sanctuary [the Ka'bah] while other people are carried away in their surroundings... (29:67).

Makkah is no run-of-the-mill city. Makkah houses the Ka‘baḥ. It is the Muslims’ *qiblah*. It is also called Umm al-Qurá (the mother of all societies). To Makkah hundreds of millions of Muslims turn while they are in communion with Allah (ﷻ) every day. Makkah is the destination of those who go there on their ‘Umraḥ any time of the year. Makkah is also the name and address of the Hajj, which is the cumulative feature of this *dīn*.

The Hajj, when performed as defined by Allah (ﷻ), is a spiritual, physical, financial, and social adhesion to Allah (ﷻ). Muslim institutions and establishments are expected to be generous and forthcoming in paying their *ṣadaqāt* and offering their sacrifices for this annual program. Tens of millions of people can expect to be purged of their selfishness during this time. The poor, the needy, the destitute, and the dislocated Muslims gain more integration and solidarity with their brethren Muslims every year when the Hajj is performed according to the Qur’an and in pace with the Prophet (ﷺ). Makkah becomes the Muslims’ commonwealth. Makkah becomes the Muslims’ United Nations. Makkah becomes the Muslims’ refuge. And Makkah becomes the Muslims seat of power. All of these components are absent from the way Muslims understand and execute their Hajj nowadays.

Stated definitively, Makkah, released from Saudi control, should be a free association of Islamic societies, formerly known as nation-states that were subject to imperialist and Zionist manipulation. With Makkah as their center they will maintain friendly and practical links with each other. There will come a time when Muslims will establish Makkah as their political, financial, and social reference point. Muslims from around the world, through their Makkah commonwealth, will decide on degrees of local or regional autonomy that do not violate or obstruct the purposes of this commonwealth. In Makkah there would be annual (‘Umraḥ and Hajj) meetings among “finance ministers,” and periodic meetings among amirs and regional leaders, as well as various committees concerned with education, agriculture, and science.

The actualization of *qiyām* means that Muslims have an association of well-defined autonomies for the purposes of world peace,

security, and cooperation. This Makkah-based association has to be active and effective in many areas, such as refugee services, development assistance, disaster relief, and cultural cooperation. This Makkah-based expression of Islamic solidarity will need a budget, and so members would contribute financially according to their resources and capacities. The working languages of this common effort, with an emphasis on the centrality of Arabic, would have to be settled by the Muslims in the spirit of equality and understanding.

With all the political injustices in the world, Makkah has to be a shelter for those who are struggling for their self-determination, justice, and equality. Makkah has to recover its political asylum status, and become a refuge for persons from other countries, who for political reasons, are banned or unwanted in their countries of origin because of their struggle for freedom, justice, equality, and participatory politics. The danger these types of freedom-fighters and freedom-seekers encounter in their own parts of the world has to be alleviated by Makkah as the sanctuary it was intended to be, **"...[this is] meant to make you alert that Allah is aware of all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth, and that Allah has full knowledge of everything."**

The status of Makkah under Saudi occupation is pathetic. No longer is the Ka'bah a *qiyām* for people. Gone are the days when Muslims were in and out of Makkah without terms, visas, restrictions, and harassment. Makkah, under Saudi social and military control, is impotent and lethargic, a city that has no social value and does not radiate with a direction for the world's people. Makkah, because of these Saudi wardens, is a petrified and unreverberant place. The Saudi caretakers are not alert to the fact that **"...Allah is aware of all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth and that Allah has full knowledge of everything."** The Saudi manhandlers of Makkah and the Ḥaram think that their intelligence and military services are beyond the active decree of Allah (ﷻ). They claim to have a security classification for information and material (that embodies information), the unauthorized disclosure of which would endanger their perceived national security, cause serious injury to the interests or prestige of their nation-state, or be of great advantage to

a foreign nation-state. All of this is poppycock. The elaborate false religiosity behind which the Saudis have dumbed-down Makkah and obliterated its Qur'anic definition of *qiyām* will break down and give way in light of the fact that Allah (ﷻ) knows all of their security classifications for information and material.

Has there been a time in history, even in the crass, pre-Islamic *jāhili* era, when Makkah was as stifled, smothered, and suppressed as it is today under Saudi suzerainty? The Saudi mis-rulers of Makkah, the Ka'bah, and the Sanctified Sanctuary should be the first to tune in to these words, **“Know that Allah is severe in retribution — and that Allah is much-forgiving, merciful.”** This “severe retribution” is proportionate to the severe crime of downgrading Makkah, demeaning the Ka'bah, and demoralizing al-Bayt al-Ḥarām. Woe to these *mushriks* in Muslim clothes. But if they reconsider and make way for the rehabilitation of this Holy of holies then they should know that **“...Allah is much-forgiving, merciful.”** The door of repentance is open; will there be any comers? In light of these *āyāt*, how long will hundreds of millions of Muslims remain in a false spiritual trance that has them in and out of Makkah in record time each year, that gives them a fickle and inaccurate sense of what Hajj and 'Umrah are all about, and that substitutes mechanical, customary, and official motions for *iqāmah*, *qiyām*, and *qawāmah*?

These words may be hard for some people to absorb, but they are necessary because if a liberated Makkah does not come alive with its springboard character, then it will be impossible for the “finest Ummah” to resume its leading role for humanity. When Makkah becomes central to the Ummah, then the Ummah will become the guiding light it was meant to be. When the Muslims yearn for a vibrant Makkah more than air, water, or food, then the world will have an expectation for the kind of impartial justice and unfettered liberty that only the Muslims can deliver. And in this milieu, Allah (ﷻ) says the following, **“No more is the Apostle bound to do than deliver the message [entrusted to him]: and Allah knows all that you do openly, and all that you would conceal.”**

The Creator who meticulously created and calibrated the heavens and earth is not going to release a wild creature to do as it

wishes in the universe without offering it direction, meaning, and purpose. The Ka'bah is there for a purpose; in its position and location there is meaning, and people assembling there should have a direction. People are not meant to come to Makkah and leave without solidarity, brotherhood, and the will to accomplish their higher responsibilities. People who wander around in an urban center can be as clueless as people who wander around in Makkah. People who are on a mission cannot be equal to people who are equivocating, vacillating, and befuddled. A committed Muslim is on a mission in life; he knows what he has to do by virtue of His Book, and he knows how to do it by virtue of His Messenger (ﷺ).

Secular officials and godless politicians will be exceedingly upset with the message contained in this Qur'an. Their anger and fury will extend to all purveyors of these glorious meanings because the former's estrangement of Makkah from Islam will be annulled by the committed Muslims as they take their direct and truthful course to Allah (ﷻ). This issue is not about ego or about winning because we deserve to be on top regardless of our moral character; rather it is about transfixing these Qur'anic words and meanings into the real world. There will be people who want to do so and there will be their counterparts who do not. This is how the meanings and significance of this lesson should be understood, **"And Allah knows all that you do openly, and all that you would hold in."** All beliefs, doctrines, policies, regulations, politics, and the like fall within the purview of this *āyah*. There are other supportive *āyāt* to this effect in other contexts and circumstances in this holy Writ,

But you [Muhammad] are required to communicate and We are required to assess (13:40);

And We but sent apostles to break good news and to issue ultimatums; so all who commit themselves and do what is right, upon them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve. And [as for] those who renounce Our demonstrations [of power], suffering will inflict them due to their decomposition [for having abandoned Our ways].

Say, “I [Muhammad] do not say to you that I am in possession of the world’s treasures, nor do I know the *terra incognita* (the *ghayb*), and I do not say to you [the *kāfirs*] that I am a king; I am only following [divinely revealed] instructions [given] to me.” Say, “Can the blind be equated with the perceptive? Do you not think?” And warn hereby those who are in awe of rejoining with their Sustainer; they have no one beside Him as their authority or intercessor — as a means for their dodging [Allah’s corrective power] (6:48–51).

The lesson concludes with stirring words that remind the reader of how this section began with *āyah* 5:87,

Say, “There is no comparison between the bad things and the good things, even though very many of the bad things appeal to you in a major way. Be, then, conscious of Allah [and His power], O you who are endowed with insight, so that you might become successful” (5:100).

In the tame nature of people who dwell in the status quo there is something appealing about bad things, ostentatious lust, and systemic vice. Moral weakness and specific forms of methodical evil-doing become attractive to some people simply because they are abundant, they appear to be irreversible, and they are characterized as organized and orderly. “Easy money-making” is appealing to many people who do not have it within themselves to change the status quo. Enjoying the “good life” is appealing because it resounds with the do-nothing attitude of materially centered humans. Usury (*ribā*) is another one of those facets of the status quo to which people are accustomed and choose to do nothing about. Crooked financial practices such as bribes and kickbacks are also engaging because “that is the way things are done, it has been this way for a long time, and no one can do anything about it.” This is the psychology of those who cannot leverage their willpower to change

this status quo. This abundance of bad things does not make it more palatable. Some opponents of the Prophet (ﷺ) stated that their way was better and that Allah (ﷻ) favored them because things were being done according to their wishes, **“And they [the deniers of Allah] said, “But we have more money and more children and [therefore] we will not be put to suffering” (34:35).**

The mere multiplicity of vice or the social acceptance thereof does not make a bad thing good. A small salary from an honest livelihood — as little as it may be — is much better than money obtained through bribes and payoffs, especially as such payments are aimed at corrupting the judgement of a person holding a trust. An amicable relationship with a few people of decent and honorable character is far worthier than utilitarian association with numerous corrupt individuals. A few people who are courageous, principled, and committed to Allah (ﷻ) can overcome the many who are cowardly, opportunistic, and godless.

“Numbers” or “the odds” have always been an issue because the unscriptured human psyche gives them more importance than they deserve. At the beginning of the Islamic struggle there were many *mushriks* who felt a sense of superiority and a pressing strategic advantage because of the relatively fewer Muslims. They thought they were formidable because of their numbers, **“We have more money and more offspring [than you — the committed Muslims]...” (35:34).** In *Sūrah al-Kahf*, the conceited *kāfir* is indicted as a loser by the very words he uttered to the committed Muslim, whom he knew, **“I have more money than you do and I have more relatives” (18:34).** Allah (ﷻ) tells the committed Muslims, who may come under the sway of such impressions, thereby losing momentum and caving in psychologically, **“Bear in mind when you [the committed Muslims] were few and oppressed on earth — afraid that people will carry you away — He offered you shelter and aided you with His victory...” (8:26).** The lesson here is that things should be considered in light of their quality (essential attribute) and not quantity. Numbers begin to gain significance when they are an extension of this essential attribute or level of excellence. Allah (ﷻ) refers man to this essential quality and its

manifestation of excellence when He says, **“Be, then, conscious of Allah [His power], O you who are endowed with insight, so that you might become prosperous.”** The true people of God are fixated on Him and His power rather than on financial clout and the leverage of corrupt funds and finances. Neither their prolific numbers nor their staggering amounts of illegal and immoral wealth hold sway against Allah’s (ﷻ) power as it works through the resolve and determination of His committed subjects. And so, man is advised to discipline himself with the profound power of God, as opposed to the fleeting power of His pretentious rivals.

Muslims Need Not Ask for More Than God Has Revealed

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Do not ask about matters that, if they were made manifest to you [in terms of law], might cause you hardship; for, if you should ask about them while the Qur’an is being revealed, they might [indeed] be made manifest to you [as laws]. Allah has absolved [you from any obligation] in this respect: for Allah is much-forgiving, forbearing. People before your time have indeed asked such questions — and in result thereof have come to deny the truth [pertaining to Allah] (5:101–102).

In the extended 23-year period of revelation, when this Scripture was in the making, the Prophet (ﷺ) was approached by some people who were curious in a way that deviated from the familiar or customary. That they wanted to ask questions was, in and of itself, innocuous; however their urge to do so began to border on disrespect for Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ). The answers to the kind of questions they were asking were annoying, even troubling, as they would have entailed greater responsibilities and sacrifices — something not everyone was willing to, or had the capacity to do. There is a latitude on certain issues that is left up to man’s common sense and better judgement. This pretermission (letting pass without no-

tice) is another expression of Allah's (ﷻ) mercy and amnesty for weak human beings.

In a sense, this *āyah* is connected to the preceding one, which says, **“...the only thing the Messenger has to do is to communicate [this message]...”** Therefore, in a broad sense, whatever the Messenger has communicated to his people, they should accept and follow; and as for whatever he did not communicate to them, they should not be inquiring about that. Had such people been allowed to badger the Prophet (ﷺ) with invasive and bothersome questions about responsibilities and tasks that had not been outlined in his mission, then the Muslims could have wound up being burdened with unbearable responsibilities and exhausting duties. Another connection between these two *āyāt* is the *kāfir*s' ridiculing the Prophet (ﷺ) for not showing them any miracles,

And they said we will not commit ourselves to you until you [Muhammad] spout for us a spring of water out of the earth or you have a garden of date-palms and vines and cause rivers to gush forth in their midst in a sudden rush, or you cause the skies to fall down upon us in smithereens, as you had threatened, or [until] you bring Allah and the angels face to face before us, or you have a house [made] of gold, or you ascend to heaven — but no, we would not [even] believe in your ascension unless you bring down to us [from heaven] a writing that we [ourselves] could read! Say, “Praise my Sustainer! But I am only a human apostle!” (17:90–93).

The meaning of these words is evident: the Prophet (ﷺ) wanted them to understand that he is a messenger who is instructed from on high to convey to them — the people — Allah's (ﷻ) message, laws, and guidelines. In the revelation of previous scriptures, Allah (ﷻ) had already produced enough of these miraculous events manifesting His supernatural presence (that is, miracles) to prove to them the validity of what Muhammad (ﷺ) was saying. However, when they continued to press for things beyond what was

being said and done by Muhammad (ﷺ), then they were courting difficulties and disaster. Besides, Muhammad (ﷺ) was not capable of controlling events at that level; these are in the realm of Allah (ﷻ). Moreover, even assuming that the *kāfirs* would have gotten what they were asking for, would they have been able to break with their own historical pattern and live up to the new responsibilities? Given their attitude toward the Prophet (ﷺ), they would have failed, leading to a swift and unrelenting punishment. When the Muslims heard the *kāfirs* making such demands upon the Prophet (ﷺ), they also became anxious to see miracles that would quieten the latter down. But when they listened to this *āyah*, they realized they should not be asking for things that may have counterproductive consequences, **“...and Allah knows all that you do openly, and all that you conceal.”** Therefore, conscientious Muslims should do what they are expected to do and leave the unexplained and, therefore, unnecessary details aside.

Another angle on this subject matter suggests that its presentation in the last *sūrah* to be revealed ties things together. At the beginning of this *sūrah*, Allah (ﷻ) alerts man to the fact that this *dīn* has been fulfilled and consummated, and thereby humanity will be able to maximize its potential by investing itself in this *dīn*. Thus, it befits the end of the *sūrah* to declare that the Prophet (ﷺ) has “done his job.” And after the *dīn* has been “all wrapped up” so to speak, it would be beneath devout Muslims to pester the Prophet (ﷺ) with prying and trivial questions, as these may solicit answers that will impact negatively on the Ummah both now and in the future, and perhaps even cause many Muslims in generations to come to disband from their relationship with Allah (ﷻ). A prophetic hadith echoes this *āyah*,

*Let go of me when I am not engaging you; what has destroyed those before you is that they would pose questions and generate differences with their prophets. So if I disallow you something, then avoid it; and if I order you to do something then do it as much as you humanly can.*⁷⁵⁰

It is said that the Prophet (ﷺ) uttered these words in relation to the following incident, in which he was making a public proclamation,

“O People! Allah has made it mandatory upon you to perform the Hajj; therefore, do go to Hajj.” Then a man asked, “[Should we go] every year?” The Prophet (ﷺ) remained silent and did not answer him the three times he asked the same question. Then the Prophet (ﷺ) said, *“Were I to answer and say ‘yes’ then it would have been mandatory upon you and you would not have been able to do it [go to Hajj every year].”* And he followed that up with, *“Do not impose on me [with excessive questions] when I am not demanding of you — for the reason that societies were ruined before you was because of their excessive questions [posed to their prophets] and thus their disagreements with their prophets. And so, if I order you to do something, then you do whatever you can of it, and if I bar you from doing something, then you avoid it.”*⁷⁵¹

*The most serious offense by a Muslim against [other] Muslims is his asking about something that was hitherto permissible, and then because of his question, became prohibited.*⁷⁵²

Closer examination of the *āyah*, **“O you who are committed [to Allah]! Do not ask about things that, if they were to be explained to you [in terms of law], might disconcert you...”** shows that the operative word in the *āyah* is *ashyā'* (things). So Muslims who are dedicated to Allah (ﷻ) should not be asking about “things” in a way that they are inclusive of every exhaustive detail. These things could be pertaining to divine law, doctrinal belief, physical phenomena, or even mystical affairs. The first of these things in the context of an apostle on a divine mission may be in reference to “the fine print” of the general instructions. Another “thing” that some people in Islam may want to inquire about is the unknown (*ghayb*), the indefinable, the cryptic. There may be details in these issues that, if expressed, will cause people to renege

or default on Islam. The “fine print” truth may either entail more rigorous and impossible standards or an embarrassment of sorts.

The *āyah*, “**Do not ask about things whose divulgence will cause you irritation...**” means to desist from the frivolous and superficial questions that some people enjoy asking. The lexical construct of the *āyah* suggests that foreknowledge of the annoying and irritating answer is enough to exclude posing the question. A hadith helps to explain this general meaning,

*Certainly, Allah, the Exalted, has assigned you obligations that you are not to disregard, and He has disallowed things that you are not to violate, and He has set legal boundaries that you are not to transgress, and He pardoned things — of which He Himself is aware — that you are not to conduct an inquiry of.*⁷⁵³

This would mean, in another sense, that once a question is asked and the answer is clear, then the questioner should not try to ask a follow-up question, the answer to which may result in undue hardship and vexation. To reiterate the aforementioned hadith, “*The highest felon among Muslims is he who asks about something that is not ḥarām but [which] then becomes ḥarām because of his question.*”⁷⁵⁴ This does not mean that Muslims should not be asking questions. If there is a need to know about a general concept or *āyah*, then a question is due. But the kind of question that is calling for unnecessary details, that takes the form of pestering and badgering, is what is proscribed.

One of the questions circulating in the Muslim public at the time the Qur’an was being revealed was about *khamr* (intoxicants). Before intoxicants were finally rendered *ḥarām* people had their questions about the consumption of liquor and other habit-forming substances. These were natural questions inspired by the buildup of *āyāt* that were meant, in the end, to disallow *khamr*. Assiduous Muslims were also concerned about the crescent moons (*ahillaḥ*), “**They ask you about the phases of the moon? Say it designates time periods for people and for the Hajj**” (2:189). And along

these lines, there were legitimate questions about a woman's *'iddah* — the prescribed retreat or waiting period after divorce or death of her husband — and especially in regard to those women who have no menstrual period? Obviously, Allah's (ﷺ) response clarified things instead of complicating them,

Now as for such of your women as are beyond the age of monthly [menstrual] courses, as well as for such as do not have any [menstrual] courses, their waiting-period — if you have any doubt [about it] — shall be three [calendar] months; and as for those who are carrying [a child in the womb], the end of their waiting-term shall come when they deliver their newborn (65:4).

Similarly, there were people at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) who wanted more information about unknown “facts” in scripture, such as the questions posed by the Yahūd about the *rūḥ*, Aṣḥāb al-Kahf, and Dhū al-Qarnayn; they, too, were given answers. Therefore, it is only the teasing, heckling, unnecessary technical, and “find fault with” questions that this *āyah* is doing away with, “...because Allah has absolved [you from any obligation] in this respect.”

Those who were guilty of behaving in such a manner up to the point this *āyah* was revealed should take solace in the fact that “...Allah is much-forgiving, forbearing”; they will not be taken to task for their previous unbecoming behavior with Allah's Prophet (ﷺ). However, after the revelation of the *āyah*, in an attempt to mitigate the consequences of their inappropriate inclinations, such people are advised to be careful, polite, practical, thoughtful — and inquisitive, but not in a way that will lead to bad repercussions for them and the many generations to come.

An important point to note from this lesson is that society contains individuals who want to ask irrelevant questions. They may try to rationalize why such questions are relevant, but in fact they are not. Islamic historical narrations describe some individuals who came to the Prophet (ﷺ) inquiring about an unknown parent. In one such instance, the questioner happened to be an illegitimate

child. There were individuals who were asking about their destiny in the world to come — and the answer was “...in the Fire.” One cannot expect to find a bona fide society absent of such people, especially primitive societies.

However, this issue of asking impertinent questions belongs in a larger context: that there is a diety revealing scripture and that there is a prophet implementing it. This means that the society around should be busy understanding and following through with God and His Prophet (ﷺ). They should know better than to press questions on matters that are open-ended, that are without fixed limits or restrictions, or that do not allow for future changes and revisions. This requires an Islamic public that is courteous enough with Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) as to avoid speculative questions.

Allah (ﷻ) is the one who knows the unknown, He knows how to “tailor” a *shari‘ah* for human society, and He knows whom to select for the task of executing such a mission. Receptive people in this context should be content with Allah (ﷻ) revealing what He does and in the way it is done. No one should be asking “hypothetical” questions, or questions that solicit legalistic answers, which in the worst case he will not be able to honor. Allah knows man’s capabilities, He is thoroughly aware of his potentials; so why should anyone — as inquisitive as he may be — be rude and disrespectful toward Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) in the manner of asking metaphysical or conjectural questions? There are some issues that were left by Allah (ﷻ) in what may be called a “gray area.” No harm will come to people if these issues were to remain in that gray area. Before people take any of this into erroneous directions, it should be emphasized here that the *āyah* applies to the time when the Qur’an was being revealed and while the Prophet (ﷺ) was still alive. It does not apply to pertinent questions that arose after the Qur’anic revelation was completed and the Prophet (ﷺ) had passed away. The human mind has to go on thinking, trying its best to understand and reach satisfying answers. But the human mind will not be doing people any favors by levying the type of questions that will make life harder for man’s lifelong commitment to Allah (ﷻ),

O you who are firmly committed [to Allah]! Do not ask about things the answer to which will disturb you; and if you ask about it during the time the Qur'an is being revealed you will be shown [the answer]... Allah has unmarked it... (5:101).

Topics left in a “general mode” by revelation do not need to be inundated by requests for “specifics,” as this may be cause “...to deny the truth [pertaining to Allah].” In other words, the devil is in the details. The Qur'an demonstrates this point by pointing to preceding people of scripture, “**People before your time have indeed asked such questions — and in result thereof have come to deny the truth [concerning Allah].**” Here the committed Muslims are being informed that, preceding them, scriptural societies, folks, and people asked these types of nerve-racking and inciteful questions that broached nonessential and superficial areas. Even though they might have thought that the extra information they were requesting would help them be more devoted to God, they ultimately ended up denying Him because the answers they received tested their patience beyond its limit and wiped out their potential. People belonging to ancient scriptures who were asking hairsplitting questions about legal matters suffered a “burnout” effect and left God altogether. Their unwarranted questions — after they had been given the complete revelation — led them into a godless wilderness and into objection to God, all of which culminated in their rejecting Him.

It could be said that some of them turned technical with God, and so when God, in turn, turned technical with them, they broke away from Him. They could no longer honor the specifics they were asking about. Had they just remained satisfied with the general outline that came to them from God they would have had an enduring relationship with Him. But man sometimes turns out to inflict harm on himself. Recall from *Sūrah al-Baqarah* that when Allah (ﷻ) ordered the Children of Israel to slaughter a cow — any cow — with no terms or preconditions, their minds and tongues, which were bent upon mocking Mūsá (ﷺ), began to solicit

specifics such as “How does it look?” and “What color is it?” They continued to press the issue with their unnecessary probes until they were presented with daunting answers and dispiriting responses. This was also the case concerning the Sabbath, which they themselves requested, but then began to violate. In fact, the above was their historical pattern of behavior until Allah (ﷻ) made unlawful to them what is otherwise lawful. The divine method of educating these types of people was consistent with their errant psychology and their intrusive doubting.

This moral and guiding lesson visits the committed Muslims with some pertinent considerations. First, the Qur’an has covered all the social ground and major issues that are relevant to the enhancement of human life. The immaculate Prophet (ﷺ) did an incomparable job in not only communicating and explaining the *āyāt*, but more importantly, in showing people how to restructure society along Qur’anic principles. This can be understood from the previous *āyah* in this *sūrah*, “**Today, I [Allah] have concluded, for you, your *dīn*...**” (5:3).

Second, this *dīn* is neither grueling nor punishing. Allah (ﷻ) has explained how He offers man facilitation. For instance, insofar as *wuḍū’* is concerned, topsoil can substitute for water under certain circumstances when the latter is not available,

But if you are ill, or are traveling, or have just satisfied a want of nature, or have cohabited with a woman, and can find no water, then take resort to pure dust, passing therewith lightly over your face and your hands. Allah does not want to impose any hardship on you, but wants to make you pure, and to bestow upon you the full measure of His blessings, so that you might have cause to be grateful (5:6).

The same applies to fasting where certain categories of people are exempt from fasting and can make up for it by a *kaffārah*. Another *āyah* at the end of *Sūrah al-Ḥajj* states that Allah (ﷻ) has not imposed any hardship and severity in matters of this *dīn*,

And strive hard in Allah's cause with all the striving that is due to Him: it is He who has elected you [to carry His message], and has laid no hardship on you in [anything that pertains to] *dīn*... (22:78).

And in *Sūrah al-A'lá*, He says, "...and [thus] shall We ease you [on a path] to placidity" (87:8). This *dīn*, and its *sharī'ah*, are known for their repose and serenity, which is why the Prophet (ﷺ) may have characterized it as *al-ḥanīfiyah al-samḥah*. He also referred to its night being similar to its day, among other things,

*I have left you [the Muslims] with what is vivid [a dīn]: its night and day are the same;*⁷⁵⁵

*This dīn is easy; and if anyone dares and defies [this dīn], it will frustrate him;*⁷⁵⁶

*The best dīn to Allah is al-ḥanīfiyah al-samḥah [the dīn of personal independence and tolerance];*⁷⁵⁷

*Make things easy and do not make them difficult; convey glad tidings and do not be repelling.*⁷⁵⁸

Third, the upstanding Qur'an is the reference of this *dīn* and its basis. Allah (ﷻ) says,

No single thing have We neglected in Our Writ (6:38);

Inasmuch as We have bestowed from on high upon you, step by step, this divine Writ, to make everything clear... (16:89).

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) represents the meanings of this Qur'an as they come alive. He uttered its words and he lived according to them — and he did so entirely and perfectly. Allah (ﷻ) says to him in this regard,

Behold, We have bestowed upon you from on high this divine Writ, setting forth the truth, so that you may govern between people in accordance with what Allah has taught you... (4:105);

And upon you [too] have We bestowed from on high this reminder, so that you might make clear to mankind all that has ever been thus bestowed upon them, and that they might take thought (16:44);

But if they turn away [from you, O Prophet, know that] We have not sent you to be their keeper; you are not bound to do more than deliver the message [entrusted to you] (42:48).

The scholarly Muslim mind is of different opinions when it comes to the injunctions (authorizations) in the Sunnah that are not mentioned in the Qur'an. Are they informed opinions and enlightened judgements of the Prophet (ﷺ)? Are they another form of godly inspiration to the Prophet (ﷺ) on par with the *wahy* (revelation)? Or did Allah (ﷻ) give him permission to extrapolate on the Holy Law? It is known from the Prophet's (ﷺ) lifetime that, at times, he would be asked questions, and he would reply, "I do not know." His practice was to wait until he received revelation from Allah (ﷻ) on that matter, and then respond to it accordingly. There seems not to be an issue of "opinion" or "point of view" when the Prophet (ﷺ) expressed himself on matters of *dīn*. That is because the Prophet (ﷺ) was in the company of Allah (ﷻ) and divinely informed by Him.

There are, though, other issues of a transient nature or of a tactical slant, such as civic, worldly-wise, diplomatic, political, or military affairs that come up as circumstances warrant. Since these involved the engagement of the Muslim public and the Muslim public mind, the *shūrā* became an important deliberative instrument to help the Ummah move in a certain direction. The Prophet (ﷺ) may have had his personal perspective on an issue, but if the overwhelm-

ing Islamic public around him adopted a different position he would consider their position, often agreeing with their recommendations. In these matters, however, Allah (ﷻ) would adjust the Prophet's (ﷺ) personal inclination, as was demonstrated throughout the decision-making process in the military campaigns of Badr, Uḥud, and Tabūk. Some of the decisions that became part and parcel of these military expeditions were not definitively covered in the *wahy*.

Fourth, the Prophet (ﷺ) is *ma'sūm* (faultless, impeccable) in his mission of relaying and communicating all that has come to him from Allah (ﷻ). He was faultless and exact in explaining the scripture to people. But with regard to matters that may be described as investigation, discovery, trial and error, and experience, he may have had sentiments or thoughts that were not necessarily what the people might have expected or might have lined up with their expectation. Concerning these issues that are not germane to scripture, *wahy*, and revelation, the Prophet (ﷺ) — as much as he was *ma'sūm* — was human. And so he said concerning these mundane matters, “*You are more knowledgeable when it comes to your dunyā.*”⁷⁵⁹

Fifth, in a broad sense, Allah (ﷻ) has relegated to people an extensive latitude when it comes to personal and collective, physical and material pastimes, on the condition that they will not violate or contradict scripture and prophet. *Dunyā* can never interdict *dīn*, and *shūrā* may never veto *sharī'ah*. Therefore, at the beginning,

He [Allah] is the One who created for you all that is on earth (2:29);

He has made as a utility for you all that is in heavens and all that is on earth — all of that from Him [to you] (45:13).

When it comes to the variations of governance and policies, He has left that up to the common sense and public mind of the committed Muslims, cultivated as it needs to be by Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) and the divine guidance he implemented. Thus does He describe the committed Muslims,

And who respond to [the call of] their Sustainer and socially establish the *ṣalāḥ*; and whose public affairs are a matter of civic deliberation among themselves; and who liberally distribute what We provide for them as sustenance (42:38).

Allah decrees that the Muslim public be obedient to those who will eventually be making these (Islamic) decisions — the elected officials, the public's chosen representatives, and the *shūrā* members of an Islamic deliberative assembly — but only so long as they are conscientiously referring to Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ). Issues pertaining to security and insecurity, the military and warfare, and public and political administration should be referred to the Prophet (ﷺ) and those who are the legitimate authorities of the committed Muslims (*ulī al-amr*). For further information on this particular and related matters, refer to the *tafsīr* of the following two *āyāt* (Volume 7),

O you who are securely committed to Allah! Pay heed to Allah, and pay heed to the Apostle and to those from among you who have been entrusted with authority; and when you are at variance over any matter, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you are [truly] committed to Allah and the Last Day. This is the best [for you], and best in the end (4:59);

And if any [secret] matter pertaining to peace or war comes within their awareness, they spread it abroad; whereas, if they would but refer it to the Apostle and to those from among the committed Muslims who have been entrusted with authority, such of them as are engaged in obtaining intelligence would indeed know [what to do with] it. And but for Allah's bounty toward you, and His grace, all but a few of you would certainly have followed Satan (4:83).

This Ummah was given a criterion (*mīzān*) along with this Qur'an, as well as the experiences of all prophets aforesaid. This criterion or touchstone — which is inclusive of all scriptural precedents, prophetic experience, and judicial evidence that pertain to goodwill judgements — is what makes justice and equality in governance possible. And so, all human issues are ultimately referred to the Qur'anic text, its justice context, and the inclusive interest of all. Along these lines, the Muslims may emulate the decisiveness of Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) in the administration of the affairs of this Ummah in matters of peace and war, public policy, and “international relations.” He did so by soliciting the opinions of people of experience, background knowledge, and intelligence in society. In his lifetime, these were the prominent Muhājirūn and the outstanding Anṣār. Toward this end, his dispatch of Mu'ādh ibn Jabal as a judge to Yemen, is a case in point,

*When a ruler/judge rules to the best of his knowledge and ability and is correct he gains two rewards; and if he rules/judges to the best of his knowledge and ability and errs then he gains one reward.*⁷⁶⁰

Sixth, this *dīn* is inclusive of human nature and human procedure. Human nature pertains to everything that is stable and well-known about man's fixed character: he eats, he drinks, he is tempted, he needs things for survival, he procreates, etc. These are matters of essence in his being that do not change or “evolve.” The Qur'anic text has covered these matters exhaustively and perfectly. Therefore, no person after the Prophet (ﷺ) can add or subtract to what is already given in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Therefore, no one can come and say, for example, that since there is soap nowadays, and soap is a cleansing agent, it can substitute for *wuḍū'*. Similarly, no one can claim that since there are now “safe” ways of cooking pork, it is the same as consuming beef, and that while it may have been *ḥarām* in ancient times, there is no reason to make it so today. The word on these matters has been spoken, and the word is eternal.

As for man's procedural *dunyawī* (worldly) affairs such as jurisprudence and governance, he has been given a broad set of outlines and principles in scripture, as well as the prophetic precedent. The details in these areas, however, are left up to the informed opinion of informed legal scholars as well as to the particulars of differing environments and transient cultures. The miraculous nature of the Qur'anic text is that its words and meanings apply to all societies, at every turn of events, and with consideration to the possible and the impossible therein. These matters of procedure are worked out within the framework of *shūrā* and *ijtihād*.

The word *ijtihād* literally refers to *mental exertion*. The name comes from a hadith in which the Prophet (ﷺ) asked one of his delegates, Mu'ādh ibn Jabal, by what criteria he would administer the regions assigned to his control. "The Qur'an" he replied. "And then what?" the Prophet (ﷺ) inquired. "The Sunnah [the practice and pattern of the Prophet]," answered Mu'ādh. "And then what?" the Prophet (ﷺ) petitioned him a second time, to which Mu'ādh finally said, "Then I will exert a mental effort (*ajtahidu 'aqlī*) and act according to that." And this the Prophet (ﷺ) approved.⁷⁶¹

Ijtihād is applied to those issues that are not covered directly by the Qur'an or the Sunnah, that is, neither by established precedent (*taqlīd*), nor by direct analogy (*qiyās*) from known laws. In an Islamic society, those who are equipped with the authority to make such original judgements are called *mujtahids*. This feature of Islamic law, governance, administration, and scholarly activity is a constant wherever and whenever the Muslims are in a dominant governing position. The institution of *ijtihād* ought not to be viewed as something historical — that is, confined to the first legitimate successors to the Prophet (ﷺ), the *khalīfahs* — nor should it be limited to those who have become known as the heads of the different schools of thought (*madhhabs*) such as Abū Ḥanīfah, Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'i, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, Mālik ibn Anas, Zayd ibn 'Alī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, etc. Within diminishing domains there are other ranks of *mujtahids*. Although the necessity of the *mujtahids* resuming their leading role today is not only theoretically acceptable but practically imperative, the established

regimes and the religious hierarchical establishments in majority Muslims lands expect of these *mujtahids* preliminary qualifications tantamount to perfect knowledge of all the laws expounded before them. This is another one of those barriers in which polluted traditions and official expediency combine to render today's Muslims without *ijtihād* and its key practitioners. Thus, for reasons such as these, not to mention the political contrivances of Islam's enemies, it has been said for over a thousand years that "the door of *ijtihād* is closed"; and since then the emphasis of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) has been to produce only commentaries upon commentaries and to expound at length about trivialities.

Nonetheless, it should be abundantly clear that *ijtihād* is always necessary and inevitable because of the need to act appropriately in new and unique situations, because information is lacking, or because competent authorities are not present. As long as an individual is responsible for himself until the Day of Judgement, every committed Muslim must engage mentally to answer some unanswered questions in his quest for living an Islamic life. Within the areas that have been under the yoke of illegitimate governmental administrations — referred to by some as "Sunnī areas" — the decisions of certain judges over the years represent small increments of *ijtihād* at the levels of their peculiar "schools of thought" or "schools of law."

In the Uṣūlī Shī'ī world, but not in the minority Akhbārī group, the situation is entirely different. *Ijtihād* is recognized as an ever-present necessity and is the prerogative of the higher Islamic authorities. Ultimately, of course, *ijtihād* is the function of the imam, but in his absence it is delegated to the senior legal scholars. Their status derives precisely from the fact that they are *mujtahids*, those who are recognized as competent to make original decisions. Moreover, every Shī'ī Muslim is expected to be following the advice and direction of a *mujtahid*. It should be borne in mind that what Shī'īs consider to be *ijtihād* may not always be so for Sunnīs. A Shī'ī *mujtahid* is, in fact, obliged to go through the process of *ijtihād* even when answering a question exactly analogous to one he may have answered in the past. Each act of *ijtihād* is considered unique and related to no more than the question at hand. The

ijtihād of a particular Shī'ī *mujtahid* is binding only upon his own followers. A major decision in recent times that necessitated *ijtihād* on the part of Shī'īs — but not Sunnīs — was whether or not circumambulation (*ṭawāf*) of the Ka'bah was valid on the recently built second level of the Grand Masjid in Makkah (the Shī'ī *mujtahids* decided that it was permissible).

Seventh, it appears from the above that the Prophet (ﷺ) was uncomfortable with interposing questions whose answers would make things more difficult or would be annoying to the rest of the Muslims. One of the fears was that answers to these types of questions could come out to be “period specific,” thus easily binding on a certain generation but not as problem free for future generations.

Eighth, it is within this “thought invoking” area that succeeding generations of Muslims after the Prophet (ﷺ) and the *khalīfahs* developed the notions of *ra'y* (opinion) and *qiyās* (analogy). The general Muslim public under the influence of particular governments were either for or against such thought “channels.”

Finally, man's relationship with Allah (ﷻ) translates into one of brotherhood, solidarity, togetherness, and unity when it comes to inter-human engagement. There are strong words in the Qur'an and from the Prophet (ﷺ) against divisions, deviations, and discord. Allah (ﷻ) says,

And hold firm to the staying power of Allah and do not disperse... (3:103);

And do not be like those who were dispersed and conflicted after they were presented with evidence [of the truth] (3:105);

In truth those who disjointed their *dīn* and became schismatics, you belong to them in no way (6:159);

And be not of the *mushriks*, of those who split up their *dīn*, with every party happy with its share [of division] (30:31–32).

These *āyāt* were not enough to prevent the Muslims from falling into divisions of a schismatic nature. Muslim political history after the *khilāfah* devolved into less than legitimate governments of monarchies and dictatorships that polarized the Muslims in a divisive way, some of which is traceable to officially sanctioned “scholarly opinions.”

Consistent with the commentary above, it would be instructive to comment somewhat on the necessity of thinking, inquiring, and researching outside this scope of legal guidance from Allah (ﷻ). Never in the Qur'an or the Sunnah is the human mind told not to pursue the facts of the physical world. To the contrary, many *āyāt* in many *sūrah's* release the God-given endowment of thinking into the micro- and macro-worlds. The human mind is triggered by Islamic convictions to move into the history of discovery; to study the nature of scientific theories, explanations, and descriptions; and to relate them to general philosophical issues in epistemology, logic, or metaphysics. Organized empirical knowledge of the kind represented by successful observation and experimentation (science) has often been taken as *the* model of human knowledge, against which other claimants can be measured; though its privileged status has been undermined by some recent theorists.

Philosophical traditions maintaining that all or most knowledge is based on experience and is ultimately derived from the senses (empiricism) is contrasted with rationalism — theories that emphasize the importance of innate or *a priori* knowledge. In the human history of thought there are intellectuals who believed that the general nature of the world could be established by reason alone, through *a priori* knowledge independent of sense experience (the narrative in *Sūrah al-Kahf* about Mūsá (ﷺ) and the virtuous sage demonstrates this notion, in part). In the course of European history, where a break occurred between religion and state, a separation also took place between empiricism and rationalism.⁷⁶²

The instruments of structured thinking were pioneered by Muslim scientists. Let no one misunderstand the meaning of this *āyah* to suggest that Muslims are irrational or mentally stillborn. Induction, deduction, inference, logic, and premise can be traced to

the Islamic Renaissance in the second, third, and fourth *hijrī* centuries. Inference from particular, observed instances to a general law or conclusion is to be found in the works of Muslim scholars and scientists. They occupied the mental high ground much before the Europeans straggled onto the scene.⁷⁶³

Algebra is a branch of mathematics in which unknown quantities are represented by letters or other symbols. It was developed by Muslim mathematicians and picked up by Europeans. The word *al-jabr*, hence *algebra*, originated from Arabic. In classical algebra (or arithmetic algebra), the operations employed are arithmetical; whereas in abstract algebra, developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, different operations are defined. In particular, in many abstract algebras, the commutative law does not apply.⁷⁶⁴ William Hamilton (1805–1865) developed the non-commutative algebra of quaternions; Arthur Cayley and others, matrix algebra; and George Boole the algebra of sets that bears his name. Non-associative algebras do not follow the associative laws of arithmetic; examples are Jordan algebras, named after the German physicist Paul Jordan in the 1930s, and most of the Lie algebras extensive in modern physics.⁷⁶⁵

Muslim scientists, researchers, and investigators generally go unnoticed in the redacted Euro-American history of science and the exaggerated claim it has over science and investigative research. Had it not been for the strong motivation toward inquiry, discovery, and inventions that come from reading and understanding the Qur'an, the Islamic scientific tradition, as sustained by the personalities below, would never have existed.

Thābit ibn Qurrah (210–288AH) was a mathematician, astronomer, and physician. Through Muḥammad ibn Mūsá ibn Shākir, one of the “Three Brothers” known as “Banū Mūsá,” who were noted scientists, he was made a fellow at the scientific academy founded in Baghdad by the ‘Abbasid ruler al-Ma’mūn. Thābit ibn Qurrah was not by conviction a Muslim, but a member of the Hellenist sect of Sabaeans in Ḥarrān, where he originated. But with the public encouragement of scientific pursuits he was able to contribute to the world of scientific advancement. This

mathematician, physician, and philosopher from Ḥarrān was appointed by the 'Abbasid ruler al-Mu'taḍid bi-Allāh as his astronomer in Baghdad. The greater part of his life was spent in translating and expounding the works of Greek mathematicians, in composing his own mathematical works, in philosophical studies, and in the practice of medicine. He wrote in Syriac on the doctrine and worship of the Sabaeans, his co-religionists of Ḥarrān.⁷⁶⁶

Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Khawārizmī (circa 163–235AH) was a Muslim mathematician from Khwarizm, Persia (now Khiva, Uzbekistan), who lived and worked in Baghdad. He wrote a book on algebra, in which the title includes the word *al-jabr*, which is the origin of the word *algebra*. He also wrote a book in which he introduced to the yet undeveloped West the Arabic-Hindi decimal number system. The word *algorithm* is a corruption of his name. He also compiled astronomical tables and was responsible for introducing the concept of the zero into Arabic mathematics.

Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan ibn al-Haytham (circa 354–430AH) was a Muslim mathematician and physicist who was born in al-Baṣrah and died in Cairo. He made the first significant contributions to optical theory since the time of Ptolemy (2nd century CE). In his treatise on optics (seven volumes), translated into Latin in 1270CE as *Opticae thesaurus Alhazeni (Ibn al-Haytham's Book of Optics)*, Ibn al-Haytham published theories on refraction, reflection, binocular vision, focusing with lenses, the rainbow, parabolic and spherical mirrors, spherical aberration, atmospheric refraction, and the apparent increase in size of planetary bodies near the Earth's horizon.⁷⁶⁷ He was the first to give an accurate account of vision, correctly stating that light comes from the object seen to the eye. Ibn al-Haytham is known in the West as Alhazen or Avennathan.

Abū Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī (362–440AH) was a Muslim scholar and scientist, one of the most learned men of his age and an outstanding intellectual figure. He was born in the Bīrūn part of Khwarizm, Persia and died in Ghazni, Ghaznavid Afghanistan. Possessing a profound and original mind of encyclopedic scope, al-Bīrūnī was conversant in Turkish, Persian, Sanskrit, Hebrew, and Syriac in addition to Arabic in which he wrote. He

applied his talents in many fields of knowledge, excelling particularly in astronomy, mathematics, chronology, physics, medicine, and history. He corresponded with the great philosopher Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna). Some time after 408AH, al-Bīrūnī went to India and made a comprehensive study of its culture. Later he settled in Ghazni, Afghanistan, where he passed away.

Al-Bīrūnī's most famous works are *al-Āthār al-Bāqiyah* ('an *al-Qurūn al-Khāliyah* (Chronology of Ancient Nations); *al-Taḥḥīm* (Elements of Astrology); *al-Qānūn al-Mas'ūdī* (The Mas'ūdī Canon), a major work on astronomy, which he dedicated to Sultan Mas'ūd of Ghazni; *Tārīkh al-Hind* (A History of India); and *Kitāb al-Ṣaydalāh*, a materia medica. In his astronomical works he discussed with approval the theory of the Earth's rotation on its axis and made accurate calculations of latitude and longitude. In physics, he explained natural springs by the laws of hydrostatics and determined with a remarkable degree of accuracy the specific weight of 18 precious stones and metals. In geography he advanced the daring view that the valley of the Indus had once been a sea basin.

It would be safe to say that a theory of knowledge in Islam is centered around the practical need for that knowledge. The purely human effort to gain access to the *ghayb* is an impossibility; man needs help in this regard. And Allah (ﷻ) gave man the information he needs to know about the *ghayb*. Besides, what information are we keen on having about the unknown that does not relate to our needs, wants, and necessities? Therefore, in a well-mannered way, we should appreciate the information Allah (ﷻ) has given us about the unknown, as it is pertinent to our lives and livelihood, and to our well-being in this world and the following one. All philosophers, intellectuals, and scholars who are trying to delve into the nature of this *ghayb* will either end up concocting abstractions and hypotheticals or go around in circles of semantics and rhetoric. This is demonstrated by the issue of *istiwā'* — **“*thumma istawā 'alā al-'arsh: then He settled into a position on the throne*” (32:4)** — which has generated endless arguments among Muslims, to the point of driving some of them into accusing their own of *kufṛ*. We, who are intellectual social beings, have to come

to grips with the fact that we are not capable of understanding through our senses, or by experimentation, the nature of the *ghayb*. All we are able to do is reason and reflect on the information that comes to us from Allah (ﷻ) about the *ghayb*.

On the other hand, in order to institutionalize the moral and legal aspects of revelation, man needs to use his mind. Without human thought and reasoning, the means of implementing and making operational the procedures and the strategy that would realize a “Kingdom of God” on earth would be severely compromised. Throughout the time period when Muslims were less than an autonomous community in Makkah, there was no “legal” dimension to scripture. None of the divine instructions revealed up to that point had an “executive” character. There were some *āyāt* on the order of “do” and “do not do” in the range of personal life. But as for well-defined legal punishments (*ḥudūd*), the discretion of judges passing legal judgements (*ta'āzīr*), and what is legally binding on people unable to meet certain validated standards (*kaffārāt*), all these were to be revealed in the course of establishing, maintaining, and expanding an Islamic society and state.

It appears that the first contemporaries of Islam understood that it is superfluous to be involved in hypothetical and suppositional issues. They would concern themselves with what they had to deal with in the real world in real time. An issue would be handled and managed without someone trying to expand the scope into a domain that could not be adequately resourced. Within this approach to doing things, a question about a practical issue would be brief, germane, and consequential.

It is said that ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb would damn anyone who would ask about something hypothetical.⁷⁶⁸ Zayd ibn Thābit, if asked a question, would enquire, “Did this happen?” And if it did, he would express his knowledge on the matter. But if the answer was “It did not happen,” whatever that issue may have been, he would reply, “Let it happen, and then we will look into it.”⁷⁶⁹ ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir, it is said, if asked about a matter, would respond, “Did it already occur?” And if the answer was “no,” he would say, “Then leave us alone until [and if] it does happen. And when it

does happen we will try our best to find an answer.”⁷⁷⁰ ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās is reported to have expressed the following,

I have not encountered an assembly of people better than those around the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ); they only asked him thirteen questions in his lifetime, all of which are mentioned in the Qur’an, such as, **“They will ask you about the sanctified month... They will ask you about menstruation...”** and the like... They only asked about matters that benefitted them.⁷⁷¹

Mālik ibn Anas is known to have said,

I recall this town [Madinah] when the only thing they had was the divine Writ and the Sunnah. When they were saddled with a matter of concern the governor would summon the scholars and then whatever they would agree upon would be carried out. Now, you [some in the Muslim public] are asking too many [irrelevant] questions, the while the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) disliked that.⁷⁷²

A hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) includes this among the things disliked by Allah (ﷻ),

*In truth Allah forbids noncompliance to your mothers, infanticide, and the miserly and acquisitive attitude. He abhors you doing three things: idle talk, irrelevant questions, and squandering [spending money wastefully].*⁷⁷³

In this hadith the phrase “irrelevant questions” may be in reference to hairsplitting questions about *fiqhī* matters, as many scholars interpreted this to mean. The superlative first generations, who were hard-working and practical Muslims, expressed strong disapproval of such quibbling questions because they were fault-finding, not critical, and generally a waste of time for those who ought to be dealing with more urgent issues, which are always around.

This intelligent and well-mannered relationship with Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) does not have the extra time and mental faculty to devote to problems that do not exist. There are people who seek fatwas pertaining to issues and things that have not happened or may never happen. Both the question and the fatwa answer make a mockery of the seriousness and earnestness of this *dīn*, *sharī'ah*, and *minhāj*. Silly questions do not occur to serious Muslims. They are more concerned, as they should be, with real problems, and how to size them up, what to look for in their nature, where to place them in context, and then determine their best executable approach.

In the world today, Islamic scholars are besieged by individuals who ask about a *shar'ī* answer to a *non-shar'ī* society. They want fatwas to fit into anti-Islamic establishments. Allah's (ﷻ) Shari'ah belongs to Allah's (ﷻ) society; not to a *jāhili*, capitalist, or secular one. What is the meaning of a "Muslim" asking a "mufti" when both of them live in an un-Islamic or even anti-Islamic established order where there is no Islamic functioning society, no Islamic political will, no Islamic economic structure, no Islamic social equality, and no Islamic normative life? What is the meaning of an "Islamic" answer within a jungle of Islam bashing, Islam hating, and Islam criminalizing? Both question and answer are out of order and out of context.

Likewise, in the *jāhiliyah-inundated* societies of today, there are the Muslims who are worried about how to spend their "*zakāh*" money when there is no Islamic system in which they may uphold, channel, and organize this *zakāh*. The meaning of *itā'*, which generally precedes the word *zakāh* in the Qur'an, has no bearing in Muslim life. Out of this runaway attitude, which is inclusive of the majority of simpleminded Muslims in the world today, come "scholars" who want to remake or to tailor Islam to correspond with the anti-Islamic world order. There is now a "modern" *fiqh* (*fiqh al-aqal-līyāt* and *fiqh al-darūrāt*, and *fiqh this* and *fiqh that*) that seeks to recast the Qur'an and the Sunnah around the *fiqh*. Should it not be the other way around? The *fiqh* itself is (or should be) an outgrowth of a solid understanding of the basis of the Qur'an and the purposes

of the Sunnah. Islam is not a slogan. Islam is not a propaganda feed. Islam is not a legal system without a spirit. And Islam is not a spirit without a legal system. When will the Muslims understand this essential fact?

Scripture Does Not Legitimize Errant Traditions

It is not of Allah's ordaining that certain kinds of cattle should be marked out by superstition and set aside from the use of man; yet those who are bent on denying the truth attribute their own lying inventions to Allah. And most of them never use their reason, for when they are told, "Come unto that which Allah has bestowed from on high, and unto the Apostle," they answer, "Enough for us is that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing." Why, even though their forefathers knew nothing, and were devoid of all guidance? (5:103–104).

Here the Qur'an is tearing down old traditions and delegitimizing cultural mores that were well established in the pre-Islamic *jāhili* society. At that time, there were four categories of cattle held sacrosanct by *jāhili* culture. The first one was the *baḥīrah*, a she-camel whose ear was deliberately split apart (in the manner of a brand or marker). A she-camel (*nāqaḥ*) was considered to have become a *baḥīrah* when it gave birth to five camels (some sources say ten), the fifth of which was a female. In their culture, it appears the *baḥīrah* held an honorific status that exempted it from being slaughtered, eaten, ridden, or burdened.

The second sanctified animal in pre-Islamic *jāhili* culture was the *sā'ibah*, primarily a camel (but could apply to other livestock), that had been set aside or dedicated to the deities of the pagan Arabian milieu. According to the Arabians' culture, traditions, and customs, the *sā'ibah* was not to be worked, its hair was not to be sheared, and it was only to be milked for a guest.

The third type of sanctified animal was the *waṣīlah* (the sequencer), that is, a she-camel or ewe that gave birth to one female after another. According to 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, it was the animal whose seventh born was a female.

The fourth was the *ḥām*, a virile male stud that could impregnate the herd. The term *ḥām*, denoting *heat* (a state or period of heightened sexual arousal), was generally accorded by the ancient Arabians to the most robust bull in a herd of domestic cattle. They would literally say, "...that animal has a fired-up back." Accordingly, similar to the other sacrosanct animals, a *ḥām* could not be worked or mounted for rides. Historical accounts relate that in some settings people would place peacock feathers on this vigorous male to distinguish it from the rest of the herd. More details about this subject matter and, specifically, what the Arabians contrived along these lines, thereby altering the standards of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), will be covered in the *tafsīr* of *Sūrah al-An'ām*.

Therefore, in breaking with this pre-Islamic Arabian tradition, the *āyah* is telling the committed Muslims that Allah (ﷻ) did not authorize the ban concerning the above four categories of animals. In this cultural practice, there was nothing traceable to Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) or to scripture that would exclude these animals from being milked, utilized, or slaughtered for food.

“Yet those who are bent on denying the truth attribute their own inventions to Allah.” When people are in a cultural God-denial they take things for granted. Who is going to investigate where these practices came from, how they originated, or how they have no relationship to scripture? They can claim that these practices have a divine origin; but where is the proof? There is none. Besides, their twisted logic would say it is Allah's (ﷻ) will that they belong to this culture; had He willed otherwise, they would not be in the culture they are in,

Those who are bent on ascribing divinity/authority to any beside Allah will say, “Had Allah so willed, we would not have ascribed divinity/authority to any but Him, nor would our forefathers [have done so]; and

neither would we have prohibited anything [that He has allowed].” Even so did those who lived before them give the lie to the truth — until they came to taste Our punishment! Say, “Have you any [certain] knowledge that you could proffer to us? You follow but [other people’s] conjectures, and you yourselves do nothing but guess” (6:148).

The implication is that what they were doing (such as having these four categories of exempt domestic animals) was because of Allah’s (ﷻ) will. Therefore, in extending this argument, it is by Allah’s (ﷻ) will that they honor the *jāhili* culture they have come into. This is absurd reasoning. Allah (ﷻ) never endorsed their cultural norms or their traditional ways. If culture is *kufr-specific* then He does not certify it. If a culture is materialistic, sensual, and worldly, then He does not license it. Allah (ﷻ) does not force people into such cultures, rather He gives people the freedom to choose the right choice in life, and He gives them the endowment of rational thought to reject cultural practices that are wrong. Just because something has been a tradition or a custom belonging to a particular culture for hundreds or thousands of years does not make it right. If Allah (ﷻ) has not forced them over the course of time to abandon their errant cultural ways, that does not mean He is satisfied with dysfunctional practices and oppressive patterns. Some of these cultural or communal traditions may be tantamount to *kufr* or *fusūq*. People begin to stand in contradiction of Allah when they venture into the danger zone of “legalizing” their traditions, when they say their cultural norms have become law, regardless of what Allah (ﷻ) has to say.

This Qur’an and the Prophet (ﷺ) came to detach people from the gravitational attraction of culture in its legal sense, “**And if they [the non-Muslims] are told, ‘Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger,’ they would say, ‘Enough for us is what we have from our predecessors.’**” In these *āyāt*, Allah (ﷻ) is giving the committed Muslims insight into the nature of culture-centric people who try to legitimize their traditional practices with a legal gloss.

When they are advised to follow what Allah (ﷻ) has revealed in the solid Qur'an with all its injunctions and laws that are substantiated with proof and evidence and founded on the basis of excluding harm and promoting renewal, free of any nonsense and superstitious notions, then these deniers offer up the excuse that they are satisfied with the socialization and acculturation they have inherited from their ethnic fathers as well as the doctrines and laws they enacted.

“But do they do that even though their fathers know nothing and were not guided?” When in fact their fathers knew nothing about divine laws and therefore had no clue about how to best pursue their worldly interests, how is it possible for them to argue that their culture was sufficient and eternal? How can people whose culture was punctuated with popular ignorance, whose religious practices were accentuated with paganism and superstitions, who used to bury their (female) babies alive at birth, who were in constant skirmishes and clashes, who lived in a state of social animosity and tension, whose women and orphans were mistreated and abused, disregard their innate intelligence and intuition, their latent motivation and capabilities, and their possible independent thoughts and opinions that would place them much higher on the ladder of civilization? How could such potential and probability succumb to a blind attachment to social control that comes from an incoherent and dim reference to ethnic history, religious bigotry, and cultural attachment?

This barrier of self-centeredness around a people's culture has always been an obstacle on the way to Allah (ﷻ). According to a previous *āyah*,

And if these [culture-based deniers of Allah] are told, “Follow what Allah has revealed from on high,” some answer, “Rather we follow what we are familiar with that comes from our forebears.” But what if their forebears could not reason and were not guided? (2:170).

These are some of the sharpest words in the Qur'an against the traditional, conventional, customary, and imitation components of

culture. A people's attachment to historical ethnicity, along with their sense of "nationalism" and in some cases "racism" are the things that make them resistant to a universal, fraternal, and socially equalizing Islam.

Ethnicity, a term often confused with *race*, refers to a shared cultural identity that has a range of distinctive behavioral and possibly linguistic features, passed on through socialization from one generation to another. An ethnic group is a segment of a population within a society whose members share common descent (actual or assumed), attitudes and behavior, and cultural and physical characteristics, and who perceive themselves as a distinct group. Clear boundaries, be they cultural or geographic, do not categorically demarcate the domain of a particular ethnic group, even though many regard ethnicity as though it were naturally determined. Ethnic differences have been a source of political unrest, often associated with religious or clan differences. The main forms of ethnic relations, which concern the interactions between different ethnic groups within a society, include assimilation, where ethnic groups adopt common cultural patterns, and eventually merge; domination, where one ethnic group controls the other(s), establishing its culture as the main one; and consociationalism, as in Switzerland, where groups retain distinct cultures and identity, but are more or less equal under the law.

Ethnocentrism, which seems to be another way of looking at "***mā wajaḍna 'alayhi ābā'anā: what we have from our forebears,***" is a parochial perspective that evaluates other societies and their cultures — including an Islamic society in the making, as was the case in Arabia at the time of Allah's (ﷺ) words and Messenger (ﷺ) — according to one's own cultural expectations and experiences. It implies an exceedingly contrived and constrained understanding of other cultures, and a notion that one's own is not only different, but "better." Ethnocentric comments are often heard from disdainful and narrow-minded tourists.

In addition to their ethnicity, which sequestered them from the holy Book and the irreproachable Messenger (ﷺ), the Arabians were tightly bound to tradition. In English usage, the word *tradition*

comes from the Latin *traditio*, meaning *handing over*. The corresponding Greek word, used in the New Testament, is *paradosis*. It is said that this was the word used by St. Paul, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." (2 Thessalonians, 2:15). Tradition pervades virtually the entire range of human activity. In government, education, family life, and so on, there are recognized principles and practices that are passed on from one generation to another. Even in the "sciences," tradition is significant. Each new investigator joins a scientific community in which there is already a preexisting body of transmitted opinion and recognized ways of conducting research. Even the most innovative researcher builds on what is already "known," owing far more to the legacy he received than to any contribution he is ever likely to make to the science concerned.

Tradition appears to be especially important in religion and theology. In a religious tradition, it is possible to distinguish three constitutive elements: first, the origin, the truth, insight, or event from which the tradition arose and which it is intended to pass on and to perpetuate; second, the transmission, the actual process of passing on or handing over; and, third, the reception and appropriation of what is passed on by those living at a particular point in time. The origin of an entire religious tradition, as distinct from minor traditions within the mainstream of tradition, is usually a revelation — an event that brings a new spiritual insight so profound that it serves as the foundation on which an entire religion is built. It must be noted, however, that even the originating event itself cannot be isolated from what already belongs in traditions reaching further back. The originating event from which the Christian tradition came was the life, death, and "resurrection" of Jesus Christ (ﷺ), but these were understood in light of the Jewish religious and eschatological tradition with its messianic expectations.⁷⁷⁴

The process of transmission is effected by quite specific vehicles in the Christian church. Preaching is the most fundamental, and has gone on since the time of Jesus' (ﷺ) apostles. Alongside preaching has been teaching, especially the instruction of catechu-

mens (new converts being taught the principles of Christianity by a catechist). The earliest preaching and teaching predated the composition of written scriptures — indeed, it is now generally believed that the Gospels were constructed out of units of teaching circulating in the early church. But when the scriptures were finally written down, they obviously became a very important vehicle for transmitting and institutionalizing the traditions about Jesus (✠). The sacraments (formal religious acts conferring grace on those who receive them) constituted a further vehicle for the transmission of the tradition, in the dramatic liturgical forms of baptism and the Eucharist (commemoration of the Last Supper by consecrating bread and wine). The community itself, and especially the ordained ministry, played an indispensable part in the work of transmission.⁷⁷⁵

Finally, tradition needs to be received and appropriated. Where the reception is only outward or formal, the tradition becomes lifeless and even meaningless, and this of course does often happen. If the tradition is alive, it must be received in such a way that the recipient participates in something of the power and illumination of the original event.⁷⁷⁶

There are two contrasting ways in which tradition may be understood: static or dynamic. In the first case, tradition is regarded to be a body of truths and practices given at the beginning, and then these are to be kept pure and unchanged from generation to generation. There is a hint of this view in a late writing of the New Testament that speaks of “...the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude, 3).⁷⁷⁷ This is sometimes called the “deposit of faith.” On a more dynamic view of tradition it is recognized that there may be development of both practices and doctrines. Such development may be simply an unfolding of what is implicit in the original given, or it may be due to the pressures of social or intellectual developments. For instance, as things played out in the environment of the Church, the authority of scripture was to be rethought in light of historical criticism. The question then arises about what legitimate development really is. Clearly there must be a demonstrable continuity, or else the tradition may be abandoned altogether. An acorn must change and develop as it

grows into a tree, however it does not grow into just any tree, but into an oak. In a living tradition there is both development and continuity. Some seem to favor a static view when they urge Christians to hold to “that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all,” along with the notion that there should be “a great increase and vigorous progress in understanding as the ages and centuries march on.”⁷⁷⁸

This discussion of tradition and development leads inevitably into the sharp opposition that prevailed for many years between Catholics and Protestants over the place of tradition. Protestants have claimed that the Bible alone is authoritative (the principle of *sola scriptura*), and that tradition can have no binding force. Catholics, on the other hand, seemed to recognize tradition as a separate source of revealed truth. But in recent years the views of both Catholics and Protestants have changed, and tradition is no longer the contentious matter it once was, at least in this span of time.⁷⁷⁹

The meaning of “tradition” within the Christian context has been cited to show how different it is from the Islamic context. Many times people who come from a deep religious background, Christians and Muslims alike, tend to be oblivious to the fine and subtle differences when they use the same word. What distinguishes Muslims from Christians is that the former have the Qur’an, which is as fresh and vital in its meanings today as it was the day it was revealed, and will remain so as long as humans have the ability to think and reason. Traditions cannot impede the dynamic relationship that is shaped by a human intellect being fortified with the ever-giving meanings of the Qur’an. There may be new dimensions or a greater range to a particular meaning. This may go horizontally (breadth) or vertically (depth), but never will there be any contradiction between the understanding human mind and the logic of the Qur’anic scripture. Tradition itself is, in a sense, an interruption of this dynamic. When the Muslims began to fracture this supportive and stimulating relationship they ended up falling prey to ill-considered and thoughtless instructions that were meant to substantiate a political agenda more so than to accurately reflect Qur’anic *āyāt* or prophetic hadiths. The early partisan falling out of

Muslims against each other deactivated their intellectual relationship with the Qur'an and the Prophet (ﷺ).

The Qur'an makes it a necessity to have knowledge concerning this *dīn*. Automatic traditions, cumulative cultures, and errant ethnicity priorities are not consistent with an intelligent and interactive relationship with the Qur'an and the Prophet (ﷺ). The Qur'an asks for evidence from these traditionalists, **“Do you [who oppose this holy Writ] have evidence about this? Or do you attribute to Allah that which you do not know?” (10:68)**. The massive phenomenon of *taqlīd*, as it exists today among the two billion Muslims, has resulted in at least two observable consequences. Firstly, it has contributed to the severe constriction of *ijtihād*; and, secondly, it has created a religion out of tradition.

This affords an opportunity to clear up what has become known by the notion of *taqlīd*. Out of the gate, it is not permissible to follow someone or accept the opinion of a scholar who belongs to a previous time and a different environment. In other words, a Muslim cannot follow a dead man, even if he is a renowned scholar (*faqīh*). And then, in the absence of legacy information on which to base procedure, a thinking Muslim, himself or herself, is required to exert mental effort and come up with a real-time answer to whatever urgent issue that is lacking resolution. A valid question arises here about those Muslims who are illiterate, ignorant, and mentally incapable of thinking out a Qur'anic and prophetic answer to an issue. Such Muslims should proactively look for and ascertain the qualified Muslims who are competent to produce answers to their questions.

The contemporary godless, secular, and materialistic era needs hundreds of millions of Muslim minds connected to the Qur'an and the Prophet (ﷺ). It is not enough for a few Islamic scholars to dispense their opinions about some issues here and there, especially as most of these issues having no bearing or connection to the life-and-death challenges of our times. All of the excuses of the opponents of Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) have been exposed by the Qur'an, and these *āyāt* are open for all to see, scholar and student alike,

They assumed their rabbis and monks as lords to the exclusion of Allah... (9:31);

We obeyed our elites and masters and they veered us off course... (33:67);

We found our predecessors on a consensus; verily, it is but in their footsteps that we shall follow... (43:23).

These *āyāt* should serve as a wake-up call for people who marginalize their own minds and follow others as they feel no sense of responsibility to “figure out” for themselves what they should be doing. This is why some people — not all people — without confessing to it, have elevated the *faqīhs* above the Qur’an and the Sunnah.

These *āyāt* are not speaking about an ancient historical human condition that no longer exists. Today’s humans are guilty of the same crimes and offenses committed by their ancestors, if not more so. The Arabians at the time of Muhammad (ﷺ) were convinced that they were the followers of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) who came to them from Allah. They never denied the existence of Allah. They reiterated Allah’s (ﷻ) existence, His mightiness, and His control of the celestial universe. However, despite their self-attribution to the religion of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), they considered themselves the source of law and the reference for jurisdiction; and if pushed (confronted) on this score, they would say that what they were doing is God’s way. This is the attitude that put them at odds with Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ), and this is how they gained the stamp of *kufr*. When people act as if they are in control of their own destiny, when they feel they are qualified to define the legal framework for society, or when they rule and judge according to their own cultural interests and ethnic priorities, then at that time they leave the pale of Islam — even if they continue to act out the formalities of Islam and reflect the outward image of a Muslim.

Muslims Do Not Belong to Exclusivist Solidarities

The flow of instructions then turns to the committed Muslims, guiding them to bright vistas that are far afield from the morass these Arabians have created for themselves. In today's world, the Arabian authority has its own laws that have no basis in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. There are things that are off limits by the force of their own laws, not Allah's (ﷻ) laws. Take for example the movement of Muslims in and out of Makkah and Madinah. Allah (ﷻ) requires these open areas to be a shelter and respite for Muslims to begin with and then for humanity at large. Therefore there is no validity for self-appointed human beings (Saudi officials nowadays) giving themselves the license to either permit or withhold people from going to these sanctuaries. Furthermore, in the Ḥijāz in particular and in Arabia as a whole, they restrict the movement of those "aliens" who do not belong to the Saudi Arabian national kingdom. What if a Muslim wants to go to Khaybar? Or al-Ṭā'if? Or Tabūk?⁷⁸⁰ Or any number of other places where the Prophet (ﷺ) himself went? According to Allah's (ﷻ) laws Muslims should have the freedom, besides the motivation, to go to all the places that Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) had visited. But the throw-back, pre-Islamic, Bedouin regime in Arabia, which claims it is following Muhammad in the same manner that its forefathers claimed to be following Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), acknowledges Allah (ﷻ) as the Creator and Maker but denies Him as the Lawmaker and Lawgiver. Or else, how do they answer to their nationalization of Islam, their restrictions and detractions from the Hajj and 'Umrah, and above all their monopoly on the geography of the Sīrah and the Sunnah?

O you who are committed to Allah! It is [but] for your own selves that you are responsible: those who go wayward can do you no harm if you [yourselves] are guided. Unto Allah you all must return: and then He will make you [truly] understand all that you were doing [in life] (5:105).

The meaning of this *āyah* confers independence, autonomy, and togetherness among the committed Muslims. Sometimes, this *āyah* is selfishly misinterpreted to mean that one is only responsible for himself, and that if everyone else is lost, then they basically have no recourse. Such an interpretation is obviously not the divine intent. For had that been the case, there would be no need to carry this message and to implement this order far and wide with the maximum amount of response possible. This *āyah* says that the committed Muslims are mutually responsible for each other, and they should take care of themselves. They would do that by consolidating their internal ranks and by promoting their public position. When they reach this level of accomplishment, then the deviations of other blocs of people and nation-states will be incapable of harming them.

The committed Muslims are required to understand this *āyah* with its full political thrust; that is, the Muslims are autonomous and independent of other factions, power blocs, and alliances. Once they have attained this self-direction and consolidated their self-rule, no other power in the world will be able to damage or destroy them. The *āyah* does not mean that once the Muslims commit themselves all the way to self-reliance and freedom from control or influence by other powers, they are released from the obligation of carrying their ideological and political message beyond their geography and society. Committed Muslims remain indefinitely responsible for "*al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar*: demanding what is inherently right and decommissioning what is inherently wrong." The first order in what is inherently right or self-evidently proper is to bring man's moral and legal standing with Allah (ﷻ) to its rightful position. And the first action to be taken against what is inherently wrong or self-evidently inappropriate is to overturn the moral and legal condition that excludes God from His influence upon man's social and economic activities, among others.

A world in which God is no longer the reference in these affairs becomes, *ipso facto*, a world ruled by an elite that wields enormous firepower buttressed by concentrated financial power. In other words, to use the Qur'anic terminology, this elite constitutes

a *ṭāghūt*. It is true that Muslims are first responsible for themselves — but this is a process. They cannot be responsible for themselves in a way that their consolidation becomes some type of nationalism, racism, or ethnicism. There is no place in a divine Islam for such egocentrism or selfishness. No one reading this *āyah* can come away thinking that it is enough for an individual Muslim to “be saved” or for an Islamic community to “be saved.” This type of understanding subverts the socializing and leading character of an *ummaḥ* whose universal Islamic responsibility is to guide the rest of humanity to the locus of the Qur’an and Sunnah.

This *āyah* does not relieve any one Muslim, in particular, or his Islamic society, in general, from their obligation to struggle against tyranny, to resist ideological evil, and to fight against aggression and occupation. The worst form of aggression occurs when local and global forces go on the offensive against Allah (ﷻ), trying to dispossess Him of His sovereignty and majesty, while assigning His innate attributes to royalties and nation-states. Similarly, the worst form of occupation occurs when the public mind becomes obsessed with ideologies and doctrines that displace Islam as an ideology and doctrine. Abū Bakr, one of the closest people to Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ), once took to the podium and said, after thanking and praising Allah (ﷻ),

O people! You read this *āyah*, “**O you who are committed [to Allah]! It is [but] for your own selves that you are responsible: those who go astray can do you no harm if you [yourselves] are guided...**” and you misplace its meaning. For I have heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say, “*If people see munkar and do not change it then Allah will eventually overwhelm them with His punishment.*”⁷⁸¹

Still, despite all of this information, there are those downcast “Muslims” who will quote this *āyah* now and then to explain away the duty of jihad and the responsibility of *qitāl*. This *dīn* is too majestic to court the cowards who are scared of the word *jihad* and the sissies who are terrorized by the word *qitāl*. There are enough think-

ing people on this earth — Muslims and non-Muslims — who understand that tyrannies cannot be wished away and that dictators will not be nonviolently replaced by Muslims recoiling into themselves and disappearing into artificial “sufi” shells or counterfeit academic bunkers. People will have their God-given liberty and their scripturally guaranteed freedom of choice as a result of all the strenuous efforts that go with an energetic attempt to achieve something. This can be done in one of two ways: either without the use of force when people are civilized enough to listen, ask questions, and reach their heartfelt decision about Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence in human life; or through the use of force that counters the force of the secular and material opposition. In the world today, there is no open platform for Muslims to go on the air, in the mass media, or through satellite broadcasting, to present this Islam as it is in the Qur’an absent the favoritism and intrusion of vested interests. There is no free flow of communication and no civil dialogue among civilizations to allow the best ideas to dominate. To the contrary, all the bad ideas enthralling the world’s innocents are the ones that are escorted into their psyches and societies by the concentrated power of hoarded wealth on the payload of a missile. It is the ultimate folly for the Muslims to entertain counsels of peace, nonviolence, and the rejection of the use of force from those who themselves are the most violent and aggressive people the world has ever seen, from those who present themselves as a global superpower, from those who democratize with “shock and awe,” and from those who colonize by “way of deception.” Let them stop using force, and they will see that the Muslims will equally oblige, **“To Allah you all must return: and then He will make you [really] understand all that you were doing [in life on earth].”**

The Islamic Fellowship Is Inclusive of Non-Muslims

The next suite of *āyāt* focuses on some legislative matters pertaining to witnessing a person's "will and testament" while he is traveling or outside of his everyday locale. There are guarantees in the Islamic moral code that secure the "rights" of both the giver and the recipient,

O you who are committed [to Allah]! Let there be witnesses to what you do when death approaches you and you are about to make bequests: two persons of probity from among your own people, or if the pangs of death come upon you while you are traveling far from home, [then] two other persons from [among people] other than your own. Take hold of the two after having prayed; and if you have any doubt in your mind, let each of them swear by Allah, "We shall not sell this [our word] for any price, even though it was [for the sake of] a near kinsman; and neither shall we conceal any of what we have witnessed before Allah — or else, may we indeed be counted among the sinful." But if afterward it should come to light that the two [witnesses] have become guilty of [this very] sin, then two others — from among those whom the two former have deprived of their right — shall take their place and shall swear by Allah, "Our testimony is indeed truer than the testimony of the two, and we have not transgressed the bounds of what is right — or else, may we indeed be counted among the evildoers!"

Thus it will be more likely that people will offer testimony in accordance with the truth, or else they will [have cause to] fear that their oaths will be refuted by the oaths of others. Be, then, conscious of Allah [His power presence], and hearken [unto Him]: for Allah does not bestow His guidance upon iniquitous folk (5:106–108).

Therefore, according to these *āyāt*, a Muslim who is dying within his own locale, district, or community is required to apportion his bequests in the presence of two acceptable and reasonable Muslim witnesses whom he knows. When he dies, these two witnesses would be responsible for delivering the appropriate bequests to the designated recipients, who were not present when the deceased Muslim's testimony was taken. But if this expiring Muslim is traveling and finds no Muslims to be his witnesses then he is allowed to delegate non-Muslims who are trustworthy to do what Muslim witnesses would have otherwise done.

In case the folks of the deceased have their doubts about the final outcome of dispersion by the witnesses, they have recourse to approaching these witnesses after the latter's *ṣalāh* or other peculiar prayers (in case they are not Muslims), and then asking them to take an oath that they fulfilled their duties as instructed by the deceased — without any personal gain, bias, or family favoritism. Furthermore, they are to vow that they are not withholding or concealing anything as pertains to this duty; otherwise, they understand that they will be at fault.

On the negative side, if it turns out that the two were false witnesses, lying upon and betraying their trust, then the two are replaced by two from the most immediate heir relatives of the deceased, who also take an oath to discharge their duty without malice or prejudice. With this done, the testimony of the first set of witnesses is annulled in favor of that of the second set. As the *āyāt* say, this method should guarantee, as much as is humanly possible, that no injustice impinges upon the distribution of bequeathed title or property. Such a “backup procedure,” infused with a sort of “checks and balances” exercised by the immediate family of the deceased, should serve to deter any potential “false witnesses” from testifying, **“Thus it will be more likely that people will testify in accordance with the truth — or else they will [have cause to] fear that their oaths will be refuted by the oaths of others.”** As is almost always the case in the Qur'an, everyone is urged to be sensitive to Allah's (ﷻ) power in their worldly lives, to be careful of triggering His power response, and to always be thoughtful of

Him; this is *taqwá*. Most certainly, Allah (ﷻ) will not guide anyone who has chosen a course away from Him, **“Be, then, conscious of Allah [His power attendance], and listen to Him: for Allah does not bestow His guidance upon iniquitous folk.”**

It should be emphasized that these procedures are only effective in an Islamic society with high moral standards; they are not impactful in a cutthroat or Machiavellian, materialistic society where everything is acceptable and considered “normal” insofar as the acquisition of wealth is concerned. Regardless of the number of Muslims in an un-Islamic society, even if there was a plurality of Muslims, as is the case in the majority Muslim countries of the world, this will not be enough for these *āyāt* to be convincing. For that to be the case, there would have to be a set of moral standards to refer to, a public morality to rely upon, and a moral system to hold everything together.

In today’s highly administered societies there are methods and procedures — such as registration, documentation, trust-deposits, and the like — to guarantee the rights of the people and individuals. These may be included in the meaning of this *āyah*, however such guarantees can only become plausible when the relationship between the state and its citizens is grounded in some kind of moral standard. Otherwise, the entire society, its government, and institutions will be a failure with the crooks having it their way either some of the time or most of the time.

Whatever the development level of a society, be it primitive or advanced, it still needs a moral character and an honest persona to bridge the gap between a dying individual and potential bequest recipients, all of whom are looking for fairness and candor. No doubt, there are some people who think that the materialistic modernity of Europe and America has rendered these divine guidelines obsolete and anachronistic. Their pessimism about Islam and adoration for the contemporary flavor of materialism, the Euro-American-Israeli paradigm, is inverted, and history has borne out this lesson so frequently that the predictable moral meltdown of Euro-American modernity will not only be inevitable, but all of its technology, applied sciences, and liberalism will not be able to stem the crash.

Islamic historical sources indicate that these *āyāt* were revealed in the matter of Tamīm al-Dārī and ‘Uday ibn Baddā’, two Christian merchants who used to do business in Makkah during pre-Islamic times. On occasion they would stay in Makkah for an extended period. When the Prophet (ﷺ) moved to Madinah they relocated the center of their trading activity to Madinah. Another person by the name of Budayl al-Sahmī also relocated himself into the market of Madinah. On one occasion the three of these merchants all went together on a trade mission to al-Shām (Damascus). On their way there, Budayl began to complain of some serious affliction. Sensing he might die, he wrote a will in his own handwriting and placed it in his belongings, which in turn he gave to his two colleagues as a trust. When Budayl died, Tamīm and ‘Uday opened up his belongings and took for themselves (pilfered) a silver container embellished with gold. Then they restored everything else to the way Budayl had arranged his belongings before he passed on. When they arrived back in Madinah, they encountered Budayl’s folks and thereupon presented them with their deceased relative’s effects. On examination of Budayl’s property, his people discovered his handwritten will and trust, and an inventory of his material possessions. But they quickly realized there was one thing missing, so they asked the two merchants about it. Tamīm and ‘Uday said that they had purchased the silver container from Budayl. But Budayl’s family became suspicious because the handwritten will in their possession did not concur with his colleagues’ story. The two, however, continued to argue that they had not concealed anything of what Budayl wanted them to express. At this point, Budayl’s family referred the issue to the Prophet (ﷺ), prompting the revelation of the *āyah*, **“O you who are committed [to Allah]! Let there be witnesses... ‘or else, may we indeed be counted among the evildoers...’”**

So then, the Prophet (ﷺ) instructed Tamīm and ‘Uday to take an oath after their prayers, saying in effect, “By God, we obtained nothing besides what we have already declared, and we have not withheld anything or concealed anything.” The whole incident continued to fester for a while, especially when it was known that Tamīm and ‘Uday had in their possession the exact silver container

described in Budayl's will. Budayl's folks reiterated that the gold-lined silver container belonged to Budayl, and thereby to his heirs. Despite these pleas, Tamīm and 'Uday stuck to their version of events, that they had bought it from Budayl, merely forgetting to mention this detail when they testified. On further reference to the Prophet (ﷺ) the *āyah* elaborates, **“But if afterward it should come to light that the two [witnesses] have become guilty of [this very] sin...”** The Prophet (ﷺ) thereafter instructed two of Budayl's family members to swear to the truth of his folk's statement to the effect that the container should be awarded to Budayl's immediate heirs. Some time later, after Tamīm al-Dārī became a Muslim and pledged allegiance to Allah's Prophet (ﷺ), he admitted, “Allah and His Messenger are truthful and honest. I did take [possession of that] container.”⁷⁸²

Whether or not this *āyah* was superseded by a subsequent one appears to be a point of contention among the scholars of the Qur'an; however, the majority of them are in mutual agreement over the following,

1. it is very important to secure a will, which can either be done when a person is in his own area and society or when a person is far away and traveling;
2. witnesses need to testify to the contents of a will; and
3. ordinarily the witnesses should be two dependable and accountable Muslims, but if no Muslims can be found, then non-Muslims may be employed as witnesses.

And yet there are still those who put down Islam by saying that Muslim societies discriminate against Jews and Christians. This *āyah* permits the people of previous scripture who are honest and reliable to become a party to the execution of a Muslim's will. A will is a very personal matter for the soon to be deceased; it expresses his wish, his desire, his inclination, and his choice on the disposition of his assets. But Allah's (ﷻ) wisdom demonstrates that it is not necessarily a private matter. And so, when circumstances dictate, Islamic law allows sincere Christians and righteous Jews to be practically in the faculty of a Muslim's consciousness and ex-

pressly deliberate action. When a person articulates his “will” that a particular disposition be made of his property, his words are words of command. The word *will* in this usage connotes something mandatory, comprehensive, and dispositive. The homogenizing *āyāt* of this inclusive Qur’an contain guidelines for involving Christians and Jews as witnesses to the legal declaration of a Muslim’s wishes as to the disposition of his property after death. Christians and Jews who ascend onto platforms of punditry and “expert” commentary, from where they cry foul about civic injustice in an Islamic society, should answer to this Qur’an. When this *āyah* together with the other inclusive *āyāt* in the Qur’an about accommodating, obliging, and reconciling people of scripture, Christians and Jews, are given their due consideration, it removes the preconceived notions that are (usually) unfavorable to Ahl al-Kitāb. However, most informed Muslims know that such criticism is opportunistic at best and malicious at worst.

God's Divinity and Authority Are Indivisible

This lesson corresponds to a theological corrective, laying out the diversions of those who say they are followers of Christ, and placing them on a tangent that has taken them off scriptural course. The timeless fact that has attended all of Allah's (ﷻ) scriptures, which has been distorted by the theology of the Christian church, is the Oneness, the Singularity, and the Uniqueness of God (*tauhid*). This Christian theology is contrary to the well-established fact enunciated from time immemorial: your God is One, and He has no rival, equal, competitor, or derivative.

- (5:109) On the Day when Allah shall assemble all the apostles and shall ask, "What response did you receive?" they will answer, "We have no knowledge; verily, it is You alone who fully knows all the things that are beyond the reach of a created being's perception."
- (5:110) Lo! Allah will say, "O Jesus, the son of Mary! Remember the blessings that I bestowed upon you and your mother — how I strengthened you with holy inspiration, so that you could speak to men in your cradle, and as a grown man; and how I imparted unto you revelation and wisdom, including the Torah and the Gospel; and how by My leave you did create out of clay, as it were, the shape of a bird, and then did breathe into it, so that it might become, by My leave, a bird; and how you did heal the blind and the leper by My leave, and how you did raise the dead by My leave; and how I prevented the Children of Israel from harming you when you came to them with all evidence of the truth, and [when] those of them who were bent on denying the truth were saying, 'This is clearly nothing but deception!'"
- (5:111) And [remember the time] when I inspired the white-garbed ones, "Commit to Me and My apostle!" They answered, "We commit; and bear You witness that we have surrendered ourselves [unto You]."

يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ اللَّهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أُجِبْتُمْ قَالُوا لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِنَّكَ
أَنْتَ عَلَّمُ الْغُيُوبِ ﴿١٠٩﴾ إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَعْيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ اذْكُرْ نِعْمَتِي
عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ وَلَدَتِكَ إِذْ أَيَّدْنَاكَ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ تُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي
الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَإِذْ عَلَّمْنَاكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ
وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَإِذْ تَخْلُقُ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ بِإِذْنِي فَتَنفُخُ فِيهَا
فَتَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِي وَتُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَهَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ بِإِذْنِي وَإِذْ تُخْرِجُ
الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِي وَإِذْ كَفَفْتُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَنْكَ إِذْ جِئْتَهُمْ
بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَإِذْ
أُوْحِيَتْ إِلَى الْحَوَارِيِّينَ أَنْ ءَامِنُوا بِي وَبِرُسُولِي قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَأَشْهَدُ
بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ إِذْ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ يَعْيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ هَلْ
يَسْتَطِيعُ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا مَائِدَةً مِنَ السَّمَاءِ قَالِ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنْ
كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾ قَالُوا نُزِيدُ أَنْ نَأْكُلَ مِنْهَا وَتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوبُنَا
وَنَعْلَمَ أَنْ قَدْ صَدَقْتَنَا وَنَكُونَ عَلَيْهَا مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿١١٣﴾ قَالَ عِيسَى
ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَا أَنْزِلْ عَلَيْنَا مَائِدَةً مِنَ السَّمَاءِ تَكُونُ لَنَا عِيدًا
لِأَوَّلِنَا وَءَاخِرِنَا وَءَايَةً مِنْكَ ۗ وَارزُقْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّزُقِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾ قَالَ

اللَّهُ إِنِّي مُنَزَّلُهَا عَلَيْكُمْ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بَعْدَ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنِّي أُعَذِّبُهُ عَذَابًا لَا
 أُعَذِّبُهُ أَحَدًا مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَٰعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ
 قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمِّي إِلَهَيْنِ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ مَا
 يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقِّ ءَ إِن كُنْتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ تَعْلَمُ
 مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ ءَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّمُ الْغُيُوبِ ﴿١١٦﴾ مَا
 قُلْتُ لَهُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَمَرْتَنِي بِهِ ءَ أَنْ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ
 شَهِيدًا مَا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنْتُ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى
 كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿١١٧﴾ إِنْ تُعَذِّبْهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ وَإِن تَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ
 الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١١٨﴾ قَالَ اللَّهُ هَذَا يَوْمُ يَنْفَعُ الصَّادِقِينَ صِدْقُهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ
 تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ
 ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١١٩﴾ لِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا فِيهِنَّ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ
 شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٢٠﴾

- (5:112) [And], lo, the white-garbed ones said, “O Jesus, son of Mary! Could your Sustainer send down unto us a repast from heaven?” [Jesus] answered, “Be conscious of Allah [His power presence], if you are [truly] committed [to Him]!”
- (5:113) Said they, “We desire to partake thereof, so that our hearts might be set fully at rest, and that we might know

- you have spoken the truth to us, and that we might be of those who bear witness thereto!”
- (5:114) Said Jesus, the son of Mary, “O Allah, our Sustainer! Send down upon us a repast from heaven: it shall be an ever-recurring feast for us — for the first and the last of us — and a sign from You. And provide us our sustenance, for You are the best of providers!”
 - (5:115) Allah answered, “Verily, I [always] do send it down unto you: and so, if any of you should henceforth deny [this] truth, on him, behold, will I inflict suffering the like of which I have never [yet] inflicted upon anyone in the world!”
 - (5:116) And lo! Allah said, “O Jesus, son of Mary! Did you say to men, ‘Designate me and my mother as two gods beside Allah’?” [Jesus] answered, “Limitless are You in Your glory! It would not have been possible for me to say what I had no right to [say]! Had I said this, You would indeed have known it! You know all that is within myself, whereas I know not what is in Yourself. Verily, it is You alone who fully knows all the things that are beyond the reach of a created being’s perception.
 - (5:117) “Nothing did I tell them beyond what You did bid me [to say], ‘Conform to [and comply with] Allah, [who is] my Sustainer as well as your Sustainer.’ And I bore witness to what they did as long as I dwelled in their midst; but since You have caused me to cease, You alone have been their keeper: for You are witness unto everything.
 - (5:118) “If You cause them to suffer, verily, they are Your subjects; and if You forgive them, verily, You alone are the Almighty, the Truly Wise!”
 - (5:119) [And on Judgement Day] Allah will say, “Today, their truthfulness shall benefit all who have been true to their word: theirs shall be gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide beyond the count of time; well-pleased is Allah with them, and well-pleased are they with Him: this is the triumph supreme.”

- (5:120) Allah's is the dominion over the heavens and the earth and all that they contain; and He has the power to will anything (al-Mā'idah:109–120).

Drawn out in clear terms here is the outline of who is divine and who is human, so much so that there could be no confusion about the nature inherent in certain Christian belief systems. These *āyāt* portray the epic scenario in which 'Īsá (ﷺ) declares — in the presence of all of Allah's Apostles and Prophets (ﷺ) along with all humanity — that he could never have told his people what they later claimed pertaining to his and his mother's so-called divinity. Jesus (ﷺ) says that it does not behoove him to say such unjustified and irrational things. The truth-telling words of Allah (ﷻ) in this enduring Qur'an depict this scene with such clarity and transparency that the reader will literally feel he is present with those forthright Prophets (ﷺ) on that Solemn Day, and with all the tenseness, anxiousness, and expectancy entailed by such a far-reaching event.

Miracles Were Not Meant to Assign Divinity to Man

Allah's (ﷻ) words bring to life the “divine courtroom” where testimony is given by those who have an unimpeachable and unblemished character, His Prophets (ﷺ), and where judgement is to be passed by the Supreme Justice, who has complete and detailed knowledge of everything,

On the Day when Allah shall gather the messengers and shall ask [them], “What reply did you receive [from your own societies]?” they will answer, “We have no knowledge; verily, it is You alone who, in full, knows all the things that are beyond a human's perception” (5:109).

This Day shall be the day when Allah (ﷻ) brings together all the prophets and apostles who were scattered throughout history, each within a time frame, a peculiar culture, and a particular society.

Now they are all there, on the Day of Judgement, and in the presence of the Creator.

Coming forth in a dignified manner on this Day are the incomparable Prophets (ﷺ) who, on earth, were scattered into various communities that were themselves spread on a timeline from the beginning of history until the end of the prophetic mission of Muhammad (ﷺ). These were the leaders of mankind when mankind was “back there on earth”; they were accompanied by the knowledge of their scripture and their mission, along with the memory of what unfolded between them and their respective societies. And now at this point on the Final Day, all of that is collected and concentrated in the proximity of Allah (ﷻ).

Life and meaning coalesce into this climactic moment, **“On the Day when Allah shall gather all the apostles and ask, ‘What answer did you receive?’”** Allah (ﷻ) is inquiring from His prophets about the answer their societies and communities gave when they were presented with scripture and revelation. Why would He ask for the answer to something He already knows — better than anyone else? When He knows everything? Allah (ﷻ) is presenting this scene in the Qur’an long before it actually occurs because He is teaching humanity through the response(s) of the ones He taught with His own hand, as it were. But His Apostles (ﷺ) are, at the end of the day, humans; they are aware of what is unfolding in front of them, but they have no knowledge of what may have developed once they passed on from their societies.

True, they did their best in communicating and delivering Allah’s (ﷻ) scripture and word. As far as they know, some people would have accepted Him, coming to the truth, and others would not have done so. Whatever happened in the wake of this “acceptance-rejection” dynamic after an apostle returned to Allah (ﷻ) is beyond the human knowledge of mortal beings, even if they are messengers or apostles. These selected Messengers (ﷺ) are well aware of their knowledge and experience limitations, and they, more than any other mortal, know about Allah’s (ﷻ) infinite knowledge. And so, on the Final Day, when they are in His presence and are asked, **“...what response did you receive [from**

your immediate society],” then what can be a better answer in this context than to refer the clarification to Allah (ﷻ), in whose presence they feel their mortality and stand in awe of His divinity?

This is a time and place when not only all messengers are present, but all humanity is attentive and watching. This is the time for everyone to saturate their senses with the whole truth about a matter that was very divisive, very controversial, and very polarizing in the history of man. In this moving picture all human beings become aware of the fact that they were approached by God’s Messengers (ﷺ). And they can see with their very eyes that these messengers are being held accountable for their scripturally defined duty toward their societies, many of whom were in denial of messenger and message.

In this grand arena, the messengers affirm that the final answer on such matters is Allah’s (ﷻ) alone. They know better than to give their partial answer to Allah (ﷻ) who has the full answer. They know themselves, and their limitations, and they know Allah (ﷻ), who cannot be checked or restrained in any way whatsoever, thus they will say, **“We have no knowledge; verily, it is You alone who fully knows all the things that are beyond the reach of a created being’s perceptual experience.”**

Putting the mission of Jesus (ﷺ) aside for the moment, the general notion that other communities and societies were divided into either supporters or opponents of their messengers comes from a knowledge of scripture. Therefore, the answer of the prophets in this *āyah* suffices, that is, Allah (ﷻ) knows better about the outcome of their interaction with their own folks throughout the long stretch of the history of societies. But then the next *āyah* singles out ‘Īsá, the son of Maryam (ﷺ). This is because the people who claimed to follow him fell into their own misunderstandings and confusion about the prophet sent to them. It was the persona of Jesus (ﷺ) that was overrun with all kinds of mix-ups, exaggerations, obscurities, and mental confusion. It was Jesus alone from among all of God’s Apostles (ﷺ) whose “followers” generated myths, superstitions, and fables about him, his “essence,” and his life from cradle to “cross.”

In this lesson of truth about a matter of untruth in the theology of those who claimed to be Christians — an untruth crafted by those who deify Jesus, worship him, and construct a false concept about him and his mother, Mary — Allah (ﷻ) turns to 'Īsā and reminds him of His privileges upon him and his mother Maryam (ﷺ). Allah (ﷻ) favored Jesus (ﷺ) with miracles so that the people around would respond to him in a positive and resolute way. But there were those who fiercely took issue with him, disavowing and slandering him. And as a possible reaction to this vilification by some, there were those who took things the wrong way altogether, misreading and misconceiving the life and purpose of Jesus (ﷺ). Because of the miracles he performed, these people deified and immortalized him on par with God Himself, not realizing that the miracles were God's courtesy instead of the origination of Jesus' (ﷺ) own innate ability,

Lo! Allah will say, “O Jesus, the son of Mary! Remember the blessings that I bestowed upon you and your mother — how I strengthened you with holy inspiration, so that you could speak to men in your cradle, and as a grown man; and how I imparted unto you revelation and wisdom, including the Torah and the Gospel; and how by My leave you did create out of clay, as it were, the shape of a bird, and then did breathe into it, so that it might become, by My leave, a bird; and how you did heal the blind and the leper by My leave, and how you did raise the dead by My leave; and how I prevented the Children of Israel from harming you when you came to them with all evidence of the truth, and [when] those of them who were bent on denying the truth were saying, ‘This is clearly nothing but deception!’ And [remember the time] when I inspired the white-garbed ones, ‘Commit to Me and My apostle!’ They answered, ‘We commit; and bear You witness that we have surrendered ourselves [unto You]’” (5:110–112).

In these *āyāt*, Allah (ﷻ) recounts the blessings and assistance He conferred upon Jesus and his mother, Mary (ﷺ). Allah (ﷻ) relates that ‘Īsá (ﷺ) was defended by Rūḥ al-Qudus in his cradle and birthplace. Speaking in his infancy, Jesus (ﷺ) protected his mother against the challenge that came from the people’s perception of her having a child out of wedlock. He spoke to people when it was unnatural (in his crib) and he spoke to them when it was unsocial (in their community and club). During all of his early travails, Rūḥ al-Qudus, the Archangel Gabriel (ﷺ), was there to support and bolster him. He came into this world without knowledge; Allah (ﷻ) taught him scripture and its accumulated knowledge, erudition, and enlightenment. Allah (ﷻ) taught him the revealed, authentic Torah, which in the hands of Banū Isrā’īl, had been corrupted. And so ‘Īsá taught scripture, instructing therefrom with wisdom. Then ‘Īsá (ﷺ) was graced with unfathomable miracles that no human being could perform, save by Allah’s (ﷻ) permission. These miracles were events that cannot be explained by the known laws of nature and are therefore attributed to divine intervention.

The explanation of miracles has caused such mental turbulence in today’s Christianity that a few of the key postulations deserve mention. In the Western mindset, the concept of miracles admits to various shades of definition dependent upon the precise context within which it is employed. Thus the term may simply signify unusual events that apparently conflict with known or assumed “laws of nature,” with no specific consideration of their ultimate cause or source. More typically, however, even in discussions of a purely philosophical nature, a divine or “supernatural” agency who is appealed to seems to be bound up with the meaning of miracle — in other words “a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent.” In the specific context of Christian theology this teleological orientation is further refined in a soteriological (salvation, redemption through Jesus) and moral direction. Miracles are viewed as particular instances of divine action that stand out from the general body of human experience, and that are located within the broader matrix of a revelatory and redemptive narrative from which they receive

their meaning and which serves to differentiate them from mere arbitrary wonders. It has been noted that “miracles are preeminently sociological phenomena,” being bound up with specific societal and fiduciary contexts in which they are recognized and acclaimed as such. A purely empirical approach to the subject is thus unlikely to generate satisfactory or decisive results, since the interpretation of the relevant evidence (whether historical or experimental) will inevitably be shaped by the plausibility structure from within which the investigation is conducted.⁷⁸³

Inasmuch as definitions of miracles uniformly identify alleged instances on the basis of their apparent transcendence of the ordinary, one key theme in discussions of the concept, especially in the modern period, has been that of the nature and status of those alleged “laws of nature” that are transgressed, broken, or interfered with. The basic framework for discussion that has prevailed in the Western tradition differentiates sharply between the “natural” and the “supernatural,” although the precise boundaries of the former category are drawn differently by varying contributors to the debate. For some, the term “nature” is to be understood in a materialistic sense in which all that is real finds its place within a closed physical system of cause and effect. Thus, reality is denied to any aspect of people’s seeming experience that cannot be accounted for empirically and verified objectively. For others, “nature” is to be defined more broadly, incorporating a supra-physical dimension of reality (psychical, spiritual, or the like), but still essentially perceived as a closed system in terms of which, by a process of rational analysis, everything is in principle explicable. The success of modern science is then frequently perceived as the successful pushing back of the boundaries of knowledge by uncovering the causal connections between events within this total system, the so-called laws of nature. The discussion of miracles centers on the question of whether or not events may be acknowledged within this system that are inexplicable within its core axioms and thus of “supernatural” origin. Thus both sides of the debate in the West often agree at least in defining the problem as one of the truth or falsity of alleged interference with natural laws by some agency lying beyond the scope of the system.⁷⁸⁴

Some have viewed such “laws” as essentially prescriptive while yet amenable to being corrected or reformed. In this view, when a true counter-instance to any supposed law occurs, the proper response is not to seek some cause that transcends the system (and hence to see the law as violated), but rather to redefine and thereby refine the system itself. The law in question is shown to be inadequate; but the system remains adequate to account for the so-called miracle, which is thus granted a perfectly “natural” explanation. A different approach views the laws of nature as essentially *a posteriori*, descriptive of what normally happens in certain circumstances, and as lacking any absolute predictive force. On this view both “true nomologicals” (what can be “substantiated” by the laws of science) and “true counter-instances” can be tolerated, whether the agency behind the counter-instance is natural or supernatural. Yet a third view allows true nomologicals a relative prescriptive force (insofar as they are true), but insists that their function is to describe what ordinarily happens when certain circumstances arise within the pattern of nature. The point about miracles, as presented by the theologian, is that it involves the introduction of a new factor into this pattern, inexplicable in terms of the pattern itself, and thereby renders the law invalid. What occurs is thus not a violation of a law but rather a situation to which that law does not apply. Thus a miracle is better defined, it is held, as an event that is in principle inexplicable within the terms of the natural alone, rather than one that breaks nature’s laws. In this case it is not the laws of nature that are violated, so much as the naturalistic or deistic assumption that God never acts in such a way as to introduce such new and unappraisable influxes of creative energy into the system.⁷⁸⁵

In many respects this cosmological framework itself is open to criticism. It is striking that in the Christian East, where nature is viewed not on the analogy of a closed mechanical system but as an open continuum characterized at its edges by mystery, the debate over miracles has not arisen in the same form. Nonetheless, one need not be in the grip of a tacit deism to think of miracles as in some sense a break with the ordinary and the expected. If it were

not so, there would presumably be no need to identify or single out such events for special consideration in the first place.⁷⁸⁶

Miracles, or “signs,” form an integral part of the apostolic traditions concerning Jesus (ﷺ), where they take their place as concrete testimonies to and embodiments of the inauguration of the Kingdom of God associated with his person. In Christian understanding, the incarnation itself, the very personal presence of God in the midst of human history and under the conditions of human existence, constitutes the central miracle to which all others pale in comparison. From the apostolic period until the European Middle Ages it was common for miracles to be alleged to have occurred, especially in connection with sites or persons of particular religious significance. By the time of the European Renaissance the nature of such claims had reached such superstitious and incredible proportions that rationalistic backlash ensued. For many, miracles were part of the bad old scheme of things that the new science and the intellectual liberty of the European Enlightenment were helping to set aside. Newly found confidence in the power of human reason, and rapid advances in the natural sciences, both served to encourage the view that eventually all that was mysterious and a source of wonder to humans would be fully understood. This basic attitude treated the miraculous elements of the Gospel tradition in various ways. Pantheists, such as Spinoza in the 17th century, identified God with the order of nature discovered by the human mind, and considered any violation of this order to be tantamount to divine self-contradiction. Deists, meanwhile, insisted that God was not such as to interfere with the world having once set it on its orderly course. Some proceeded to view the alleged miracles of Jesus (ﷺ) as a sorcerer’s deception of the ignorant, while others preferred a less cynical approach, presenting them as events with purely natural explanations, which were either misunderstood or misconstrued by the bystanders. In the 19th century of the Gregorian calendar, some propounded the view that miracles constitute part of the “mythological” strand in the *kerygma* (preaching the Gospel of Christ in the manner of the early church), and should be understood as making a theological and interpretative statement

about Jesus' (ﷺ) significance. For the most part, all but the most conservative agreed that, however they were to be accounted for, the miracles did not actually happen.⁷⁸⁷

Developments in modern science and other fields of understanding in the last century have favored a rather more open-ended perspective on reality. Both within the Church and outside it there is a perceptible dissatisfaction with rationalism, materialism, and numerous other associated aspects of the Enlightenment's bequest to modernity. Perhaps it may be that, in renewed consideration of the concept of miracles within the context of a view of creation as an essentially open rather than closed system, there lies a potentially fruitful route to dialogue between the natural and social sciences and Christian theology, and a reintegration of theology into the mainstream of intellectual life in the West.⁷⁸⁸

The above is just a sampling of Western intellectual attempts to explain something, or to try to place it within a materialistic or empirical framework, that human knowledge and experience does not have the capacity to tackle. The reality is that Jesus (ﷺ) could not have done what he did unless he was permitted by God to do so. He configured a bird from clay and then breathed into it, at which point it became a live bird — by God's permission. How could he do such a thing? There cannot be a laboratory or material answer to this question, simply because man does not know how creation starts up or how life is sparked. Jesus (ﷺ) did what no other human could do, but he did all that within the will of God. Jesus (ﷺ) transformed a clay figurine into an actual, living, and breathing bird without it going through the normal fertilization, conception, and birthing process. He also caused a person who had been born blind to see. This is a medical condition that neither modern medicine nor future medicine may have a cure for. Allah (ﷻ), who grants vision to humans to begin with, can also grant vision to humans later on in life, if He so wills.⁷⁸⁹ Jesus (ﷺ) healed a person with leprosy, again by the authorization of Allah (ﷻ).⁷⁹⁰ Even though Allah (ﷻ) has placed the cure for every disease within the reach of man (he just has to discover it), Jesus (ﷺ) did not cure the leper by resorting to some sort of medicine — and

therein lies the miracle. And finally, by Allah's (ﷻ) empowerment, he brought dead people back to life.

It is at this point that Allah (ﷻ) reminds Jesus of His divine protection from the harmful intentions of Banū Isrā'īl who, after seeing the evidence presented by Jesus (ﷺ) turned against him, accused him of lying, and claimed that his miracles were acts of magic and illusory feats. The fact of the matter here is that Banū Isrā'īl could not deny these miracles because thousands of people witnessed them. The fact that contemporary materialism cum secularism is trying to "explain away" (in other words, deny) prophetic miracles is a testimony to Banū Isrā'īl's dominance over the Western mind that has found its own way to reject God. Banū Isrā'īl, out of their self-centeredness and their desire to be recognized as God's stand-ins on earth, did not want to acknowledge the miracles performed by Jesus (ﷺ) with God's mandate and authority. And so from the scheming of Banū Isrā'īl that culminated in their eagerness to kill and crucify him, Allah (ﷻ) provided his prophet larger-than-life protection. In the end, their conspiracy failed as Allah (ﷻ) withdrew Jesus (ﷺ) from the cycle of life and raised him unto Himself.

Jesus was also reminded of how Allah (ﷻ) inspired his disciples to commit to Him and to Jesus (ﷺ), and they did so willingly and earnestly,

And [remember the time] when I inspired the white-garbed disciples, "Commit to Me and My apostle!" They answered, "We commit; and bear You witness that we have surrendered ourselves [unto you]" (5:111).

These miracles, which were meant to show people the way, were used by those with ulterior motives to convolute the truth and mislead the public. The tortuous history of Europe and America has been wrapped around fallacies pertaining to Jesus (ﷺ), but on the Day of Judgement he will be brought face to face with this history in front of God and humanity, especially those who claimed to be his followers and believers. The unvarnished truth will be presented

and no establishments or temporal powers will have the agency to distort it, as was the case in the earlier worldly life.

Miracles Do Not Come Cheap

The historical narrative, which corrects what had been altered in previous scripture, widens in the following *āyah* to include a defining moment in the life of Jesus (ﷺ) and his exceptional disciples. They, too, were privy to the miracle rendering character of their teacher,

[And], lo, the pupils said, “O Jesus, son of Mary! Could your Sustainer send down to us a repast from heaven?” [Jesus] answered, “Be conscious of Allah [His power affirmation], if you are [truly] committed [to Him]!” Said they, “We desire to partake thereof, so that our hearts might be set fully at rest, and so that we might know you have spoken the truth to us, and so that we might be of those who bear witness thereto!” Said Jesus, the son of Mary, “O Allah, our Sustainer! Send down upon us a repast from heaven: it shall be an ever-recurring feast for us — for the first and the last of us — and a sign from You. And provide us our sustenance, for You are the best of providers!” Allah answered, “Verily, I [always] do send it down unto you: and so, if any of you should henceforth deny [this] truth, on him, behold, will I inflict suffering the like of which I have never [yet] inflicted upon anyone in the world!” (5:112–115).

The narrative of the repast, or tablespread, as presented here in the words of Allah (ﷻ) does not appear in the Christian version of the life of Jesus (ﷺ), that is, in the gospels that were written many years after he passed on. These gospels are not God’s words, rather they are the narratives of people who recalled or recollected the lifetime of Jesus (ﷺ). The Injil (Gospel) that Allah (ﷻ) re-

vealed to 'Īsá (ﷺ) has been lost for all practical purposes, except whatever of it survives in the Qur'an. What is recounted in these gospels, however, is a story about an incident referred to as the "Last Supper," "Lord's Supper," "Holy Communion," or "Holy Eucharist." This is considered by Christians to be the central feature of Christian worship instituted by Christ the night before his "death" (1 Corinthians, 10:16–17, 11:23–26; Matthew, 26:26–28; Mark, 14:22–24; Luke, 22:17–19).

Christian worship from the beginning (Acts of the Apostles, 2:46) centered on the presence of the "Risen Christ." This living presence was experienced especially at mealtime. In the breaking of bread, the Resurrection was made real to Christians (Mark, 16:14; Luke, 24:35, 42; John, 21:12–13; Acts of the Apostles, 10:41). The earliest account of the supper (in time) occurs in the Book of 1 Corinthians,

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come (1 Corinthians, 11:23–26).

St. Paul gives his account in a reproof of the Corinthians for unruly common meals (1 Corinthians, 11:17–22, 27–34) that deny Christ and love for one another. The supper was first celebrated on the night of the "Lord's betrayal." Jesus (ﷺ) broke bread and was reported to have said, "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke, 22:19). Christ then, according to the official Christian narrative, took the cup after supper and called it "the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke,

22:20). St. Paul connects celebration of the supper with proclaiming the “Lord’s death until he returns” (1 Corinthians, 11:26).

St. Mark gives the earliest account of the supper in the gospels, calling it a Passover meal (Mark, 14:14, 22–24). St. John reports that it took place “before the feast of Passover” and omits the words of institution (John, 13:1). Some ecclesiastical scholars think the “Bread of Life” sermon in the Book of John refers to the words of the Last Supper — that the bread is his body, and the wine is his blood (John, 6:53–56). St. Mark’s account is similar to St. Paul’s, but he adds the promise that Jesus (✠) will drink wine again in the Kingdom of God (Mark, 14:25).

Another incident in the Christian version of things centers around the feeding of the five thousand. Perhaps because of the mild weather or the magnetism of Jesus’ (✠) words, no one noticed that the hour was getting late,

And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a lonely place, and the hour is now late; send them away, to go into the country and villages round about and buy themselves something to eat.” But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii [about \$80; one denarius equaled a day’s wages] worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?” And he said to them, “How many loaves have you? Go and see.” And when they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” Then he commanded them all to sit down by companies upon the green grass. So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men (Mark, 6:35–44, Revised Standard Version).

The next day everyone was talking excitedly about how Jesus (ﷺ) had fed a crowd of as many as 5,000 people with only two fish and five loaves of bread. Some claimed it was actually the predicted messianic banquet that was to be held at the dawn of the new age. Others hailed Jesus as Elijah reborn; still others spoke of John the Baptist (ﷺ) raised from the dead. According to some reports, the crowds had been so affected by Jesus' (ﷺ) powers that they had wanted to make him king. In his columned throne room at the lakeside capital of Tiberias, Herod Antipas listened to these reports with mounting concern. Although he could not believe that this man was actually the expected Messiah, the fact that his followers believed he was, made him a dangerous rival. His fears deepened when he heard that some of Jesus' (ﷺ) disciples claimed their master had walked upon the waters of the Sea of Galilee and had calmed a sudden storm. Antipas could no longer afford to let this man remain free. Sooner or later Jesus (ﷺ) would lead an uprising against him. He called his council together at once to discuss the safest means of eliminating this troublesome character.⁷⁹¹

Jesus (ﷺ) preached as a Jew to Jews. He had been carefully brought up in the traditions of Banū Isrā'īl, well-versed in Jewish law and scripture. Before the crowds grew too large, Jesus (ﷺ) taught in the synagogue. There, on the Sabbath, all the faithful gathered, and during the long service a learned man was likely to be called upon to speak.

Messianic expectations, which, because of the words of certain prophets, had been present in Judaism for centuries, were strongly aroused in Jesus' contemporaries by the prophecies of John the Baptist (ﷺ). When Jesus spoke to them of the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God, he seemed to some to be the long-awaited Messiah. But different classes of Jews had different conceptions of a messiah, and Jesus (ﷺ), when he did not conform to those ideas, was not accepted by most as the Christ. His message had the strongest appeal for the lower classes. He strove to prepare his people for the impending Last Judgement, and during the course of his calling he gave them a new moral code. Jesus (ﷺ) drew heavily on Judaic tradition for the basis of the ethic of love and forgiveness

that he originated, but by consolidating diverse elements of Jewish teaching and by binding those elements into a cohesive whole, he invested them with new meaning and a different scope.

Jesus (ﷺ) was born into a world pervaded by the supernatural. Belief in demons, exorcism, and magic was virtually universal. Jewish history bore ample witness to the power of prophets to perform miracles as a manifestation of the divine will. The followers of Jesus (ﷺ) who believed that he was the Messiah expected “mighty works” of him, and although they marveled at the acts themselves, they were not surprised to learn that he had fed 5,000 people by multiplying five barley loaves and two fish, or that he had healed a leper. Skeptics, however, still asked for miracles that they might believe, “Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, ‘Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you’” (Matthew, 12:38). The many miracles attributed to Jesus (ﷺ) in the gospels were acts of compassion, performed to help men better understand the message he brought to them.

Some second generation Muslims, among them Mujāhid and al-Ḥasan, are of the opinion that this feast or repast never took place. Their reasoning is that when Jesus’ (ﷺ) disciples heard Allah’s (ﷻ) words, “...and so, if any of you should henceforth deny [this] truth, on him, behold, will I inflict suffering the like of which I have never [yet] inflicted upon anyone in the world!” they were afraid and withheld their request. However, the majority of thoughtful and scholarly opinions hold that this well-prepared and greatly enjoyed dinner actually did occur; as Allah (ﷻ) says, “Verily, I do send it down unto you...” And if these are His words, then there should be no doubt that He did prepare such a miraculous feast for those who asked for it.

To reiterate, these words are going to be exchanged between Jesus and his disciples on the Day of Judgement in the presence of all people, and in the presence of Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophets (ﷺ), “[And] lo, the followers [of Jesus] said, ‘O Jesus, son of Mary! Could your Sustainer send down unto us a banquet from heaven?’” Nobody could have been closer to Jesus than his followers and disciples; they knew him to be a mortal man, the son of

Mary (ﷺ). Therefore, out of their innermost convictions and certainties, they called upon him, not as a god or a divinity, but as a human and a man. They did not call him the son of God — rather, they beseeched him as the son of Mary (ﷺ), a person, an individual, and an earthborn. They knew that it was the Sustainer of Jesus, the Lord of Jesus who made it possible for Jesus (ﷺ) to perform such miracles and supernatural things. They knew that Jesus (ﷺ) did not do these miraculous and marvelous things independent of God or through his own abilities.

And so, when they asked to have a banquet sent down from heaven, they did not ask him to do it, because they knew on his own he would be unable to do such a thing, thus they put their request in the words, **“O Jesus, son of Mary! Could your Sustainer send down unto us a banquet from heaven?”** In the mode of commitment and devotion, these disciples knew, as would any committed Muslim, that Allah (ﷻ) is capable of fulfilling such a request. So the question is not about His ability to do it as much as it is about the propriety of doing it. In other words, is it within the wisdom — not the capability — of God to fulfill their request, **“Could your Sustainer send down unto us a repast from heaven?”** The answer as expressed by Jesus (ﷺ) was for them to be careful about asking God to do things for them, as they should be more confident and less doubtful about God and His power and wisdom, **“[Jesus] answered, ‘Be conscious of Allah [His power bearing], if you are [in essence] committed [to Him]!’”** It appears that Jesus (ﷺ) was not anxious to do marvels at their request. From some of the narratives about him, he replied that only members of a wicked generation would put such a condition on their faith.⁷⁹²

But the disciples reiterated their request with further explanation as to their motivation and purpose,

Said they, “We desire to partake thereof, so that our hearts might be set fully at rest, and so that we might know you have spoken the truth to us, and so that we might be of those who bear witness thereto!” (5:113).

In the disciples' view, with this food being unlike any other food on earth, their hearts would settle down as their eyes would visualize a miracle unfolding in front of them. At that time they could ease into the fact that Jesus (ﷺ) had come to them with a fact verifiable by their senses — a reality that to them was palpable. From here on they could become witnesses to attest to this faith in the presence of their kinsfolk and common people.

And to put their hearts at ease, Jesus (ﷺ) turned to Allah (ﷻ) in reverent petition,

Said Jesus, the son of Mary, “O Allah, our Sustainer! Send down upon us a repast from heaven: it shall be an ever-recurring feast for us — for the first and the last of us — and a manifestation [of power] from You. And provide us our sustenance, for You are the best of providers!” (5:114).

This solemn petition discloses how a humble human heart addresses the Sustainer of life and the Master of might. Jesus (ﷺ) calls on Allah (ﷻ) as *the* God and *the* Sustainer. He beseeches Him to bring down to the disciples a tablespread of food from heaven (*mā'idah*) that will overwhelm them with joy — an unfading memory that would become a recurring Day of Holiness for the first of them and the last of them. And all this would come from His provisions as He is the best to provide. Thus, Jesus (ﷺ) knows that he is a subordinate, of a rank lesser than God, that God is his Sustainer and Lord, and that it is God who is the miracle-worker. All of this will unfold with an audience consisting of all human beings from the beginning until the end of time. This will all be spread out in heavenly company on a most spectacular Day.

So, Allah (ﷻ) answered His subject Jesus, the son of Mary (ﷺ), in the most courteous and prudent way. They requested a miracle and God answered them by offering one, with the proviso that if after this miracle anyone denies Him, then He will cause them to suffer like no one else in the history of the world,

Allah answered, “Verily, I do send it down unto you: and so, if any of you should henceforth deny [this] truth, on him behold, will I inflict suffering the like of which I have never [yet] inflicted upon anyone in the world!” (5:115).

This indicates that there is a price for requested miracles. People cannot ask for a miracle and then after a short while or a long while turn away from God — who answered their prayer for it — forget Him, and think that He will not hold them accountable. He will. And He will do it in a most severe, intensified, and extreme way, the likes of which is unheard of. Miracles are not cheap. They are not what people on earth may characterize as an offer, acceptance, and negotiation type of deal. Denying Him after He responds with miracles is an act of very, very serious consequence. In ancient history, Allah (ﷻ) took societies and cultures into oblivion because they turned their back on Him when He was forthcoming with them. When societies denounce the prophets who are instrumental in the way miracles unfold, they doom themselves. And the punishment for those who deny God after the miracle takes place, by years or generations, may come in this world or in the life to come; both are equally true.

There is a detail here that cannot be overshadowed. This level of conviction that needs a miracle as a confidence builder is not on par with the companions of the final Prophet (ﷺ) who held themselves to an altogether higher standard. This divine narrative demonstrates the qualitative difference between the immediate followers of Jesus on the one hand and the companions of Muhammad (ﷺ) on the other. A comparison of the assurance-seeking requests made by Jesus’ disciples and the “silent struggle” of the companions of Allah’s final Prophet (ﷺ) turns up a distinction based on the nature and level of commitment.

Allah (ﷻ) stirred faithfulness, loyalty, and devotion in the disciples of Jesus (ﷺ). And so they indeed became his followers and supporters, to such an extent that they asked him to testify to their compliance with God. But even though that was the case, coupled

with the fact that they witnessed the many miracles performed by their prophet, they nonetheless asked him for a new miracle. They wanted to sooth their hearts, to feel assured by Jesus (ﷺ) as to their satisfactory status with him and God, and to bear witness to all coming generations.

What is known of the companions of Muhammad (ﷺ) is that they did not request a single miracle after making a decision to comply with Allah (ﷻ). The certitude they developed in their inner thoughts and the resolve that welled up in the core of their hearts about Allah (ﷻ) was so substantial that it did not need to be buttressed by a reassuring miracle. Their firm and close relationship with Muhammad (ﷺ) precluded them from asking for extraordinary and supernatural events to boost their faith. This Qur'an was so overpowering and all-consuming that they immediately recognized it to be the miracle. Hence, they were so occupied with its meanings and implementation that it would have been "silly" for them to ask for a physical miracle when they could sense miracles in every other non-physical manifestation of miracles.

As to the two sets of disciples, one of them around Jesus and the other around Muhammad (ﷺ), both surrendered their lives to God, and were, therefore, Muslims. Both of them were elect and special in their own ways; but the ones around Muhammad (ﷺ) were at a level that is, in a matter of stage and rank, a degree above their early Christian counterparts.

Jesus (ﷺ) Exonerates Himself from Errant Church Theology

All human beings, who are onlookers in that grand scene on the Day of Judgement are then transported into the heart of the matter: the issue of divinity versus mortality, that is, the difference between God and man. This is the issue that human history either has tried to dodge or to which it has been dovetailed. This is the pivotal issue in all scripture. And with all humanity and history in witness on this Day of Answerability, they will listen to a formal and systematic questioning about the issue of divinity that swirled around Jesus, son of Mary (ﷺ), in the lapsed world. This inquiry will be addressed to

Jesus so as to present the truth to those who deified him. Now, they may listen to Jesus (ﷺ) as he clears and acquits himself from this heresy and religious fabrication of the worldly church. He in word and in truth exonerates himself from their misbegotten theology,

And lo! Allah said, “O Jesus, son of Mary! Did you say to men, ‘Designate me and my mother as two deities beside Allah’?” [Jesus] answered, “Limitless are You in Your glory! It would not have been possible for me to say what I had no right to [say]! Had I said this, You would indeed have known it! You know all that is within myself, whereas I know not what is in Yourself. Certainly, it is You alone who fully knows all the things that are beyond the reach of a created being’s perception. Nothing did I tell them beyond what You did bid me [to say], ‘Worship [and conform to] Allah, [who is] my Sustainer as well as your Sustainer.’ And I bore witness to what they did as long as I dwelt in their midst; but since You have caused me to cease [existing among them], You alone have been their keeper: for You are witness unto everything. If You cause them to suffer, [then] surely, they are Your subjects; and if You forgive them, [then] surely, You alone are the Almighty, the Truly Wise!” (5:116–118).

Minimum common sense suggests that Allah (ﷻ), who knows all, is well aware of what Jesus (ﷺ) told the people around him in the Holy Land. But here, on this majestic Day, the expansive, awe-inspiring, and formidable inquiry has a deep, intense, and consuming impact. Even though Jesus (ﷺ) is the one receiving the question, all of the people who were consumed with this matter in life will feel that the question is directed at the ones who confused God’s limitless divinity with Jesus’ limited humanity. The answer that carries the weight of the untainted truth puts those who deified a noble and virtuous Jesus (ﷺ) in a very troubling position.

The resounding truth just about to be uttered will break the belief that Jesus was God. Jesus (ﷺ) cannot carry the burden of fabrications, fictionalization, and fables that were attributed to him by a cluttered church and a troublesome theology. Jesus (ﷺ) is not going to say he was a deity, or even a scintilla of a deity, knowing that he was and always has been a human, a mortal, and a temporal being. Jesus (ﷺ) knows who he is: he knows he is a subject and servant of God and not a derivative or a differential of God. He knew this before becoming God's apostle and he knew it afterward. For this reason and because of this deep knowledge, Jesus (ﷺ) began his answer by saying, "**Limitless are You in Your glory!**" or "**May You be praised!**" Jesus (ﷺ) then hastens to emphasize his total innocence of any statement attributing divinity to him, "**It would not have been possible for me to say what I had no right to [say]!**" Jesus (ﷺ) refers to the majesty of God so as to absolve himself of such a deliberately false and improbable account, while he reiterates his human nature as contrasted with God's divinity,

Had I said this, You would indeed have known it! You know all that is within myself, whereas I know not what is in Yourself. Certainly, it is You alone who fully knows all the things that are beyond the reach of a created being's perception (5:116).

After this glorification and exaltation of God, Jesus (ﷺ) affirms the long awaited answer: that he and all the people are subjects and servants of God, that God is their deity and divinity, and that the mutual relationship between God and man has to be constructed upon this understanding, "**Nothing did I tell them beyond what You did bid me [to say], 'Worship [and conform to] Allah, [who is] my Sustainer as well as your Sustainer.'**" Finally, Jesus (ﷺ) exempts himself from what others said and did after he passed on. The best reading of this text indicates that Jesus, the son of Mary (ﷺ), completed an active life span, which ultimately expired. Then Allah (ﷻ) raised him into heavenly company (the proximity of God). Some would say that Jesus (ﷺ) is alive in the "company"

of God. There is no contradiction between Jesus (ﷺ) having concluded a time period on earth and now being in the vicinity of God. The martyrs have the same description. As to what exactly is meant by “life in the ‘locality’ of God,” there can be no satisfactory description or explanation.

Jesus (ﷺ) goes on to set the record straight,

And I bore witness to what they did as long as I dwelt in their midst; but since You have caused me to expire [from that time and place], You alone have been their keeper: for You are witness unto everything (5:117).

The word *tawaffaytanī* (*You caused me to expire*), which is used in the *āyah* above, is not the same as the Arabic word *amattanī* (*You caused me to die*). There is another *āyah* in the Qur'an where both words are used, and this sheds light on the difference between the two,

Allāhu yatawaffá al-anfusa hīna mawtihā wa-allatī lam tamut fī manāmiḥā: Allah will cause lives to expire at the time of death and those not dead yet to experience inanimation during their sleep (39:42).

There is a scholarly difference of opinion on whether Jesus' (ﷺ) earthly life came to an end or not, that is, did he actually die? And this has to do with the interpretation of the word *tawaffaytanī* (*You caused me to expire*): is this expiration the ultimate expiration of death; or is it a transient expiration as happens to a person when he goes to sleep? The less popular opinion in Islamic scholarly circles is that Jesus (ﷺ) expired in the full meaning of the word, meaning he actually died. The mainstream scholarly opinion, however, is that he was raised unto Allah (ﷻ) after a minor expiration (as people would expire from life during their sleep).

“If You cause them to suffer, [then] certainly, they are Your subjects; and if You forgive them, [then] certainly, You alone are the Almighty, the Truly Wise.” Why will people holding a false faith and a corrupted creed about Jesus (ﷺ) be vulnerable to

distress, agony, and physical suffering in the ultimate life that is approaching? Plainly speaking, it is because of their belief in a mortal-cum-deity; in the racial presentation of that mortal in their image; and in the wars of imperialism that centered around their superiority over other people's assumed inferiority. It is because they nurtured a world-order, from time to time, that favored a discriminatory and prejudiced adjudication over impartial justice, which they roundly rejected. The resurrection of Jesus (✠), a concept canonized by the Church and made divisive by its theology, is going to come back and haunt its adherents on the Day of Truth and the Day of Compensation.

This concept of the Resurrection of Jesus (✠) says that God raised Jesus (✠) from the dead and it is this version of the Resurrection that is the central and distinctive claim of the early church, as evidenced in the New Testament. The earliest surviving witness to this claim is to be found in the Book of 1 Corinthians, where St. Paul declares that the tradition he received affirmed Jesus' (✠) death for the sins of his people and his having been raised from the dead — that is, by God,⁷⁹³

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures;

And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God (1 Corinthians, 15:3–9).

There appears to be a paucity of analysis in Christian historical sources about who presented this information to St. Paul. Was that

person a prophet? And finally, why do conventional Christians accept what St. Paul, a mere man, is saying and not consider what God is saying in the Qur'an?

Although this letter was written in the early-50s CE, St. Paul makes clear that he is passing on a set of convictions that had been passed on to him presumably at the time of his conversion, which could have been within a year or two of the "crucifixion" itself. Similarly, in the Books of Philippians (2:9–11) and Romans (1:4), St. Paul is apparently reproducing older hymnic or creedal tradition, which affirms that after Jesus' (ﷺ) death on the cross he was exalted by God, and that his resurrection was the means by which God acclaimed him as His son. Thus the belief in the Resurrection goes back to the earliest years of the church's existence, at least as the Christian version of history records it.⁷⁹⁴

St. Paul further reports that the appearances of the "risen Jesus" were not all private, individual experiences, but that they took place in groups ranging in size from "the twelve" to "more than five hundred." His own encounter with the resurrected Christ (1 Corinthians, 15:8) may be identical with the experience he describes in the Book of Galatians (1:16), when God "was pleased to reveal His son to [or in] me." In both the 1 Corinthians and Galatians accounts, the appearances of Christ are linked with his being commissioned to carry out the church's mission to the Gentiles. He observes that both the death and the resurrection of Jesus (ﷺ) are "in accordance with the scriptures," which is a surprising claim since there is almost no direct mention of the resurrection of the dead in the Old Testament. The few scriptures to which St. Paul does make reference in this connection have to do with the exaltation of Jesus (ﷺ), rather than with his resurrection as such. Of paramount importance for St. Paul is that the resurrection of Jesus (ﷺ) makes possible the moral renewal and transformation of God's new people, who are invited to share in the new life of obedience and victory over sin, which Jesus' resurrection has made possible and for which it is a model (Philippians, 3:10–12; Romans, 6:5–11; 2 Corinthians, 4:10–14).⁷⁹⁵

One striking detail of the resurrection tradition, which St. Paul draws upon in the Book of 1 Corinthians (15:1–58), is the

claim that Jesus (☩) was raised “on the third day.” This may be based on a historical tradition as to when the appearances began, or it may derive from the prophecy of Hosea (6:2), which predicts that God will restore people “on the third day,” or it may represent an effort to demonstrate that the Resurrection took place in space and time, rather than as a merely inner or spiritual experience. Or it may be a combination of these factors. Unlike St. Paul, the gospels all point initially to the emptiness of the tomb of Jesus (☩) on the morning after the Sabbath (Mark, 16:1, 6; Matthew, 28:1, 5–6; Luke, 24:1–6; John, 20:1, 17), which by Jewish calculation would be “the third day.”⁷⁹⁶

Another form of pre-Pauline tradition that presupposes Jesus (☩) being restored to life, without actually referring to the Resurrection, is the words of institution of the “Lord’s Supper,” where reference is made to the restoration of fellowship with the disciples in the Kingdom of God (Mark, 14:25) or to his coming to them in the future (1 Corinthians, 11:26). Apart from this feature of expectation of renewal of fellowship in the Age to Come, and the predictions that God will vindicate him by raising him from the dead (Mark, 8:31, 9:31, 10:33–34; and parallels in Luke and Matthew), the gospels differ from St. Paul and among themselves in their portrayal of the appearances of Jesus (☩) after his death.⁷⁹⁷

In the Gospel of Mark, in addition to the just mentioned predictions of Jesus being raised, there are promises that Jesus (☩) will resume his role as leader of the disciples (14:28; 16:7). His exaltation as the “son of man” is announced in connection with his prediction of the Temple’s destruction (13:26), but there is merely a description of the empty tomb, and no report of a post-Resurrection appearance. In the Gospel of Luke, however, there are several stories of Jesus’ (☩) appearances to groups of followers (24:13–22), in which he stresses that what has happened to him is in fulfillment of scripture (24:26,32), and that he is a tangible human being, as demonstrated by his sharing a meal with the disciples — one in which the traditional eucharistic words appear: *took, blessed, broke, gave*.⁷⁹⁸

In the Gospel of Matthew more attention is given to the miraculous details that accompany the descriptions of the “risen

Jesus”: the earthquake and angelic visit when the stone is rolled back (28:2), and the felling of the Roman guards (28:4). The message of the resurrection is explicit (28:16–20). There is, in addition, an apologetic feature that discounts the charge of the detractors of the Christians’ belief in the Resurrection, which claims that the followers stole his body from the tomb (28:11–15). In the Gospel of John, the Resurrection is no surprise, since Jesus (ﷺ) throughout the narrative announces his eternal existence (8:58), his identity as “the resurrection and the life” (11:25), and that his death is to be regarded as his glorification (13:31–33). It is assumed throughout that he will be raised (14:2–3, 19, 28; 17:1, 13), and his appearances are described in detail (20:11–18, 19–28, and in the epilogue, John, 21).⁷⁹⁹

In the Book of Acts, the Resurrection is appealed to primarily as proof that Jesus (ﷺ), the chosen instrument of God, has been exalted (1:3; 6:11), that his death was in fulfillment of scripture (2:22–28), and that God has now glorified him (3:13–15; 7:56; 10:40–41; 13:33–35). In the post-Pauline letters, Jesus’ (ﷺ) resurrection is described almost entirely in terms of his exaltation as the triumphant agent of God who establishes God’s rule in the creation (Ephesians, 1:19–23; Colossians, 2:9–13). In the Book of 1 Peter, the Resurrection is the ground for the new birth of Christians (1:3–7); and in the Book of Revelation, Christ is depicted as the Lamb that was slain, who is now exalted in the presence of God and who is God’s agent to defeat the powers of evil and bring to earth the City of God, in which God dwells in the midst of people (21). In spite of the variety of images, the different New Testament writers share the conviction that the resurrection of Jesus (ﷺ) is both the instrument of and the demonstration of his role as the one through whom God’s kingdom is established on earth.⁸⁰⁰

This is the long and short of the Resurrection around which the Church and its political representatives pummeled the world with their justification for the Crusades, colonialism, imperialism, and their corporate world order. It should come as no surprise, then, that the words of truth spoken by Jesus (ﷺ), the servant of God, distance him from these counterfeit concepts. In this amazing scene

on that dazzling Day, the voices of these claimants to such a Christian creed are not to be heard. The Qur'anic text does not shed a single ray of light on them. They may have been consumed by the shame and ignominy of having stood for a fickle faith and a recreant religion called "Christianity." And this scene is captioned by the following words of Allah (ﷻ),

[And on Judgement Day] Allah will say, "Today, their truthfulness shall benefit all who have been true to their word: theirs shall be gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide beyond the count of time; well-pleased is Allah with them, and well-pleased are they with Him: this is the triumph supreme." Allah's is the dominion over the heavens and the earth and all that they contain; and He has the power to will anything (5:119–120).

Statements that deviate from or pervert the truth are not going to be acceptable on that Ultimate Day. Christians who are approaching that Final Day with this theological prevarication should consider what God is telling them in the Qur'an and part with Pauline Christianity. The essential problem here is that early in gospel history there were those who conjured up this confusion between who is God and who is man. And they continued to obfuscate the truth by placing Jesus (ﷺ) in the middle of all this. Even to this day, they have not come to realize that this is one of the most serious allegations a person can utter. If they stick to their erroneous theological guns they will suffer the serious consequences.

"On this Day, the truthful will benefit from their truth." The final word on the subject, as it should be, is Allah's (ﷻ) — lush gardens where bodies of water abound, therein to live for eternity; for He is satisfied with them and they are satisfied with Him. And this is the outstanding success that cannot be matched by anything else. ■

Endnotes

564 **Abyssinia** – former name of Ethiopia.

565 Muḥammad Abū Zuhrah, *Khātam al-Nabiyyin (The Final of the Prophets)*, Volumes 3 and 4. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, year of publication unspecified), p. 970.

Heraclius (circa 575–641CE) – emperor of Syria (610–641CE). He inherited an empire weakened and demoralized by the excesses of his predecessor, and witnessed the Persian invasion of Syria that resulted in the capturing of Antioch and eventually Damascus. By 618CE, the Persians had conquered Palestine and Egypt, where, as in Syria, the Monophysite population, though it did not welcome the invaders and quickly learned to fear and detest them, gave little support to the invading forces. While this disaster was in progress, Slavic raids pierced to the walls of Constantinople and the last Roman forces were driven out of Spain by the Visigoths. Heraclius responded to this apparently hopeless situation by raising and training a new army, which he financed in part by appropriating gold and silver valuables from churches. In the three extraordinary campaigns that he conducted between 622–628CE, he carried the war into Persian territory. The resulting peace (630CE) restored Syria, Palestine, and Egypt to the empire.



At this moment of his greatest triumph and prestige, Heraclius attempted to heal the religious division that had weakened his empire. The means of doing this, moreover, seemed to be at hand. As early as 622CE, Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople (610–638CE), had suggested that a way to compromise might be found by conceding the Monophysite position on the controverted question of Christ's *energeia* (operation, activity). Apollinaris of Laodicea had spoken of "one *energeia*" in Christ to correspond with his one nature, and Severus of Antioch had in this regard followed Apollinaris against the tradition represented by Leo's Tome (a letter sent by Pope Leo I to the Council of Chalcedon explaining the position of the papacy in matters of Christology), which asserted that each nature had its own operation. Sergius' idea, of which he persuaded Heraclius, was that the formula "one *energeia*" could be reconciled with the Chalcedonian doctrine of two natures if it were understood that *energeia* properly pertains, not to a thing's nature, but to its ontological subject of hypostasis. Since Christ (according to Chalcedon) is one hypostasis, he would necessarily, on this view, have a single "energy" or operation. At the successful conclusion of the Persian campaigns, Heraclius attempted to win the Monophysite leaders to this formula, and his attempt enjoyed initial success.

In the end, however, it faltered. In the first place, it evoked the opposition of the Chalcedonian monks of Palestine, whose aged leader, Sophronius, was elected Patriarch of Jerusalem in 634CE. This opposition forced Heraclius and Sergius to seek the support of Rome. Pope Honorius (625–638CE), however, judged that the introduction of new dogmatic teachings was the business of ecumenical councils alone. He pointed out that the term *energeia* was unscriptural and intimated that “two natures” implies “two operations.” In an unfortunate afterthought, he added that he was prepared to speak of “one will” in Christ.

This diplomatic and on the whole collegial disagreement with Rome was accompanied by events that seemed to make Heraclius’ whole enterprise meaningless. Out of the Arabian Peninsula, in the years following the death of the Prophet (ﷺ) around the year 632CE, burst the Islamic popular force for freedom, equality, justice, and participatory politics for all. Damascus succumbed to this much-needed development in 635CE, Antioch and Jerusalem in 638CE. Nevertheless, in 638CE Heraclius published his *Ekthesis*, which followed Pope Honorius in forbidding all talk of “one energy” or “two energies,” but went on to make dogma of his suggestion that in Christ there is but one will (Monothelitism). Since Syria was already lost to the Roman Empire, the only effect this decree had was to inflame the opposition between Chalcedonians and Monophysites in Egypt and thus render that province the more ready for Islamic “theological” liberation in 641CE. By the time Heraclius died in 641CE, the portions of the empire he had recovered from the Persians had fallen again — and this time permanently — into the hands of its Islamic liberators. The Monophysite problem was no longer his to solve. Heraclius’s *Ekthesis* stood, however, as the standard of imperial orthodoxy, and the so-called Monothelite controversy continued.

Maximus the Confessor (580–622CE), one of the formative minds behind Eastern Orthodox theology and spirituality, entered the debate in defense of the Cappadocian doctrine that will and “energy” pertain to nature and not to hypostasis. The implication of this view was that if Christ has, according to the teaching of Chalcedon, two natures, then there are in him two wills corresponding to his divine and human modes of being. This brought Maximus into alliance with Pope Martin I (649–655CE), who in 649CE assembled a synod in Rome. This synod proclaimed the existence of two wills, human and divine, in Christ and went on to condemn not only Heraclius’s *Ekthesis* but also the *Typos*, in which the reigning emperor, Constans II (642–668CE), had forbidden discussion of the question of Christ’s will(s). This defiance of the emperor led to Pope Martin’s imprisonment in Constantinople and, later, to exile in the Crimea, where he died.

Constans’ successor, Constantine IV (668–685CE), however, was willing to come to terms with the Holy See of Rome, which in this matter had remained adamant. Entering into negotiations with Pope Agatho (678–681CE),

Constantine IV summoned what was to be known as the sixth Ecumenical Council, which met in Constantinople from 680–681CE. This assembly declared that Christ has “two natural wills or willings... not contrary one to the other... but his human will follows, not as resisting or reluctant, but rather as subject to his divine and omnipotent will.” It also condemned Patriarch Sergius; Heraclius’ appointee as Patriarch of Alexandria, Cyrus; and Pope Honorius. With this decision, the course of the great christological controversies came to an incremental end. The tendency of Justinian’s neo-Chalcedonian orthodoxy to drift in the direction of Monophysitism — the very tendency that Heraclius’ Monenergism and Monothelitism had represented — came to an end. It was affirmed that the human nature of Christ is a principle of human willing and acting, that is, because they are indeed natural and not sinful, the willing and acting are harmonious with the divine will that informs and guides them.

Like Chalcedon itself, the sixth Ecumenical Council was a triumph for Europe and the West. It was followed by another synod that marked the increasing alienation between Rome and Constantinople. Since neither the council of the “Three Chapters” nor the council of 681CE had formulated any disciplinary canons, Justinian II (685–695, 704–711CE) summoned an assembly to meet at Constantinople in 692CE to complete their work. Called the Trullan Council (from the *trullus* or domed room in which it met) or the Quinisext Council (because it completed the work of the fifth and sixth Ecumenical Councils), this assembly was entirely eastern in composition. While it renewed many ancient canons, some of its enactments directly contravened European practice. In agreement with Chalcedon, it decreed that “the See of Constantinople shall enjoy equal privilege with the See of Old Rome.” It permitted marriage for deacons (ordained ministers of an order ranking below that of priest) and presbyters (priests) and condemned the Roman prohibition of such marriages; forbade the Roman custom of fasting on Saturdays in Lent; prohibited the favorite European representation of Christ under the symbol of a lamb, ordering instead the depiction of a human figure to emphasize the reality of the incarnation. The acts of this council were never recognized in the European West, and they are significant of the growing estrangement in feeling and practice between Asian East and European West — an estrangement that the policy of the iconoclastic emperors of the 8th century was to aggravate.^a See also **Endnote 143** in Volume 3 and Endnote 102 in Volume 4.

a Williston Walker et. al, *A History of the Christian Church, Fourth Edition*. (New York, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1985), pp. 181–83.

567 Ibid.

Recall that Ḥaṭīb ibn Abī Balta‘ah, who was in Madinah with the Prophet (ﷺ), sent a letter to the *mushriks* of Makkah in an effort to curry favor with them so that they would not harm his family there. It was in response to this occurrence that the *āyah* was revealed, “**O you who are committed [to Allah] do not designate My enemy and your enemy as your superordinates...**” (60:1).

568 Muḥammad Abū Zuhrah, *Khātam al-Nabiyyin*, Volumes 3 and 4, pp. 983–85.

569 Ibid., p. 986.

570 Ibid.

571 **goy** – Hebrew for non-Jew. Originally meaning a nation, the word was later applied in the plural (*goyim*) to the (gentile) nations of the world.

572 **monk** – a member of a religious community of men typically living under vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience; in Greek, the word means *alone* or *solitary*, hence one who is alone or solitary.

The Augustinians, the Franciscans, and their branches, the Cistercians, the Benedictines, the Theatines, the Trappists, the Carthusians, the Premonstratensians, and the Camaldolese are all monks.

573 **Seven Deadly Sins** – also known as the cardinal sins, this is a grouping and classification of vices of Christian origin, which is not found per se in the Bible. The modern concept of the seven deadly sins is linked to the works of the fourth-century monk Evagrius Ponticus, who listed eight evil thoughts in Greek. They were translated into Latin, thus becoming part of the Western (Catholic) tradition’s spiritual devotions. In 590CE, Pope Gregory I (pope from 590–604CE) revised this list to form the more well-known list, which is given below:

1. **pride** – quality or state of being proud; inordinate self esteem: “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs, 16:18);
2. **lust** – to have an intense desire or need: “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew, 5:28);
3. **gluttony** – excess in eating and drinking: “...for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags” (Proverbs, 23:21);
4. **greed** or **avarice** – excessive or reprehensible acquisitiveness: “Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as

- to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more” (Ephesians, 4:19);
5. **laziness** or **sloth** – disinclined to activity or exertion; not energetic or vigorous: “The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway” (Proverbs, 15:19);
 6. **wrath** or **anger** – strong vengeful anger or indignation: “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs, 15:1); and
 7. **envy** – painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage: “Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Peter, 2:1–2).

574 Willam H. Gentz (editor), *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion*. (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: The Abingdon Press, 1986), p. 839.

St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430CE) – Refer to p. 71 and **Endnote 28** in Volume 4; pp. 321–23 and 328, and **Endnote 411** in Volume 7; p. 337 and **Endnote 620** in Volume 8; **Endnote 137** in Volume 9.

575 Ibid.

576 **Ka'b al-Aḥbār** (died 32AH) – his full name was Abū Ishāq Ka'b ibn Māti' al-Ḥimyarī al-Aḥbār; he was a prominent Jewish rabbi from Yemen who neither accepted Islam while the Prophet (ﷺ) was alive, nor made an effort to see him, even though he knew that the Qur'an was being revealed. It is said that Ka'b came to Madinah during the *khilāfah* of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and there “became a Muslim.” After 'Umar's death, Ka'b went to al-Shām and became one of Mu'āwiyah's advisors. Said to have been over 100 years of age, he died in Ḥumṣ during the *khilāfah* of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān.

'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās called him a liar and accused him of introducing Jewish myths into Islam. Even though there is only one narration attributed directly to him in the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, he is known to have had a profound influence on Abū Hurayrah, to whom several thousand hadiths have been attributed — a number of which are questionable or outrightly false. Ka'b al-Aḥbār is said to have had the greatest impact on the introduction of *isrā'īlīyāt* (Jewish traditions) into Islamic hadith literature.

577 **antichrist** – a notion found in the Bible, only in the Johannine Letters, referring sometimes to a single figure and at other times to many who are adversaries and deceivers of God's people. In later centuries, it was conceived as a supreme evil figure, often identified with one's opponents.

Armageddon – a place mentioned in the New Testament (Revelation, 16:16) as the site of the final cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil in the last days. The name is a possible corruption of “the mountains of Megiddo” or some other unknown location in Palestine.

Nero Claudius Caesar (37–68CE) – Roman emperor (54–68CE); originally called Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, the son of Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus and Agrippina, daughter of Germanicus. He owed his name and position to the driving ambition of his mother, who engineered his adoption by the Emperor Claudius, her fourth husband. Initially his reign was good, thanks to his three main advisors: his mother, the philosopher Seneca, and the Praetorian Prefect Burrus. But after Agrippina’s murder (59CE), and his advisors’ fall from favor, Nero — who was more interested in sex, singing, acting, and chariot-racing than government — neglected affairs of state, and corruption set in. He was blamed for the Great Fire of Rome (64CE), despite assiduous attempts to make scapegoats of the Christians. A major plot to overthrow him (the Conspiracy of Piso, 65CE) was conceived but detected, and Rome had to endure three more years of tyranny before he was toppled from power by the army, and forced to commit suicide. See also Endnote 101 in Volume 3.



Huns – an Asiatic people, probably the Xiongnu (Hsiung-nu), who were forced west by the invading forces of the Chinese Han dynasty; they subsequently overran the Gothic tribes of southern Russia, and precipitated the great Germanic migration into the Roman Empire. It has therefore been argued that, through the Huns, Chinese expansionism helped cause the fall of Rome. They were feared for their brutality throughout the Roman Empire. United under Attila (the Hun, 406–453CE), they laid waste to parts of Gaul and Italy (451–452CE), but were then forced to retreat, and the dominance of the Huns was soon eclipsed.

Reformation – a term generally used to describe the great religious movement of the 16th century that divided western Christianity into the Catholic and Protestant camps. Among the preliminary skirmishes that preceded the Reformation in Germany was the great dispute between Reuchlin and the “obscurantists” resulting from the Dominican onslaught on Hebrew and Islamic literature. Most of the early Reformers, appealing to the authority of scripture as against the tradition of Rome, attached great importance to the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, and many of them studied Hebrew in order to understand it fully. For this reason, their opponents often accused them of judaizing, and Catholics suspected the Jews of actively fo-

menting the Reform movements. This may have been unjustified, although some Jews regarded the schism in the Church as fulfillment of prophecy and as a prelude to messianic days.

Martin Luther (1483–1546), though, hoping at first that the Jews would be won over to Reformed Christianity, subsequently vented his disappointment by adopting a ferociously anti-Jewish attitude, and none of the Reformers was in any degree publicly pro-Jewish. Nevertheless, the suspicions of the Catholic Church against the Jews as fomenters of Reform were in part responsible for the stern measures adopted against them by the popes in the Counter-Reformation. The Reformation otherwise had no immediate effect on the position of the Jews, many Protestant areas of Europe excluding them while Catholic regions continued to tolerate them. It was only with the subsequent development of a mercantilistic outlook in Puritan England and Holland that a more tolerant attitude began to be manifest in the Protestant world. See also **Endnote 120** in Volume 6 and **Endnote 364** in Volume 10.

Louis XIV (1638–1715) – also known as the Sun King, he was king of France from 1643 when he succeeded his father, Louis XIII; his mother was Anne of Austria. Until 1661, France was ruled by the chief minister, Jules Mazarin, but later Louis assumed absolute power, summed up in his saying, “*L’Etat c’est moi*: I am the state.” Throughout his reign he was engaged in unsuccessful expansionist wars — 1667–1668, 1672–1678, 1688–1697, and 1701–1713 (the War of the Spanish Succession) — against various European alliances, always including Britain and the Netherlands. He was a patron of the arts. In 1660, Louis married the Infanta Maria Theresa of Spain, but he was greatly influenced by his mistresses, including Louise de La Valliere, Madame de Montespan, and Madame de Maintenon. See also **Endnote 402** in Volume 10.



578 **Wilhelm (William) II** (1859–1941) – the last German emperor (Kaiser) and king of Prussia (1888–1918); born in Potsdam, Germany, he was the eldest son of Frederick III and Victoria (the daughter of Britain’s Queen Victoria), and grandson of William I. Upon dismissing Otto von Bismarck (1890) he began a long period of personal rule, displaying a bellicose attitude in international affairs. He pledged full support to Austria-Hungary after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo (1914), but then made strenuous efforts to prevent an escalation of the resulting international crisis. During WWI, he became a mere figurehead, and when the German armies collapsed and US President Wilson refused to negotiate while he re-



mained in power, he abdicated and fled the country. He settled at Doorn, in the Netherlands, living as a “country gentleman” until his death.

- 579 **(Thomas) Woodrow Wilson** (1856–1924) – US statesman and 28th president (1913–1921); born in Staunton, Virginia, USA. He studied at Princeton and Johns Hopkins universities, became a lawyer, a university professor, president of Princeton University, and governor of New Jersey (1911) as a Democrat. Elected president in 1912 and 1916 (two terms in office), he oversaw the Prohibition and women’s suffrage amendments to the US Constitution, advocated America’s participation in WWI, developed a peace plan (the *Fourteen Points*), and championed the League of Nations. His health declined after the US Senate’s rejection of the Treaty of Versailles (1919).



- Anthony Charles Lynton (Tony) Blair** (1953–present) – British politician who served as leader of the Labour Party (1994–2007) and prime minister (1997–2007). In the aftermath of 9/11, together with then US President George W. Bush (2001–2009), he invaded Iraq (2003) based on spurious (cooked-up) evidence of Saddam Hussein producing and warehousing weapons of mass destruction, which were considered to be a threat to the security of Western nations (read that, Israel). See also **Endnote 130** in Volume 3.



- 580 **Onward Christian Soldiers** – a 19th-century English hymn whose lyrics were written by Sabine Baring-Gould (1865), and whose music was composed by Arthur Sullivan (1871). The hymn’s theme is taken from references in the New Testament to the Christian being a soldier for Christ.

1 Onward, Christian soldiers,
 marching as to war,
 With the cross of Jesus
 going on before!
 Christ, the royal Master,
 leads again the foe;
 Forward into battle,
 see his banner go!

Onward, Christian soldiers,
 marching as to war,
 With the cross of Jesus
 going on before!

2 At the sign of triumph
Satan's host doth flee;
On, then, Christian soldiers,
on to victory!
Hell's foundations quiver
at the shout of praise;
Brothers, lift your voices,
loud your anthems raise!

Onward, Christian soldiers,
marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
going on before!

3 Like a mighty army
moves the church of God;
Brothers, we are treading
where the saints have trod;
We are not divided;
all one body we,
One in hope and doctrine,
one in charity.

Onward, Christian soldiers,
marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
going on before!

4 Onward, then, ye people,
join our happy throng,
Blend with ours your voices
in the triumph song;
Glory, laud, and honor,
unto Christ the King;
This thro' countless ages
men and angels sing.

Onward, Christian soldiers,
marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
going on before!

Bruce Lincoln (1948–present) – professor of the History of Religions in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois, USA; also a member of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and Committee on Medieval Studies. He emphasizes critical approaches to the study of religion, particularly in issues of discourse, practice, power, conflict, and the violent reconstruction of social borders. His research has concentrated on the religions of pre-Christian Europe and pre-Islamic Iran, but his eclectic writings also include Guatemalan *curanderismo*, Lakota sun dances, Melanesian funerary rituals, Swazi kingship, the Saint Bartholomew’s Day massacre, Marco Polo, professional wrestling, Persian imperialism, the theology of George W. Bush, and comparative demonology.



David Domke (1967–present) – professor and chair in the Department of Communication at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington, USA. Before teaching, he worked as a journalist for several newspapers in the 1980s and early-1990s, including the *Orange County Register* and *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. His research and teaching focuses on issues of racial and religious identity in American politics. He is the author of *God Willing? Political Fundamentalism in the White House*, the “War on Terror,” *the Echoing Press*, and *The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon in America*.



581 **Tim LaHaye** (1926–2016) – American evangelical Christian minister, author, and speaker. Best known for the *Left Behind* series of apocalyptic fiction, he authored more than 85 books, both fiction and non-fiction. He founded the Christian Heritage College (1971), now known as San Diego Christian College. In 1979, he encouraged Jerry Falwell to found the Moral Majority and sat on its board of directors. Leaving the ministry to concentrate on politics and writing, he founded the Council for National Policy (1981), a conservative think tank, also known as “the most powerful conservative organization in America you’ve never heard of.” LaHaye played a significant role in getting the religious right to support George W. Bush for the presidency in 2000.



Jerry Falwell (1933–2007) – refer to **Endnote 344** in Volume 7 and **Endnote 185** in Volume 4.

John Charles Hagee (1940–present) – pastor of Cornerstone Church, a mega-church in San Antonio, Texas; CEO of Global Evangelism Television (GETV); and president and CEO of John Hagee Ministries, which telecasts his national radio and television ministry to more than 150 million households in the US and worldwide.



Hagee believes the Bible commands Christians to support the State of Israel and the Jewish people. The San Antonio B'nai B'rith Council awarded Hagee with its “Humanitarian of the Year” award, the first time this award was given to a non-Jew; Hagee also received the Zionist Organization of America’s Israel Award from former UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick. Hagee, who has visited Israel more than two dozen times and has met with every Prime Minister since Menachem Begin, had donated millions to support Jewish orphanages. In 2006, Hagee and some 400 leaders from across the Christian and Jewish communities formed a new national organization called Christians United for Israel (CUFI), which lobbies members of the US Congress, professing a biblical justification for the defense of Israel.

His incendiary views on Islam dovetail with his support for Israel, for instance, “...those who live by the Qur’an have a scriptural mandate to kill Christians and Jews... it teaches that very clearly,” and “There are 1.3 billion people who follow the Islamic faith, so if you’re saying there’s only 15 percent that want to come to America or invade Israel to crush it, you’re only talking about 200 million people. That’s far more than Hitler and Japan and Italy and all of the Axis powers in World War II had under arms.”

Jack Van Impe (1931–present) – American televangelist who is known for his half-hour weekly television series *Jack Van Impe Presents*, an eschatological commentary on the news of the week through an interpretation of the Bible; the program airs throughout the US and several other countries. Recurring themes on his program, among others, include the second coming of Jesus (ﷺ), modern “Chrislam,” differences between the biblical Jesus and the Jesus of Islam, and “radical” Islam. Van Impe ceased airing his show on the Trinity Broadcasting Network when it refused to run an episode of *Jack Van Impe Presents* that criticized Robert Schuller and Rick Warren (other televangelists) for promoting “Chrislam” (a one-world religion joining Christianity and Islam). One of his more animated campaigns concerns the implementation of Shari’ah in the majority Christian nations of Europe and the Americas.



Cyrus I. Scofield (1843–1921) – refer to **Endnote 556** in Volume 10.

Hal Lindsey (1929–present) – American evangelist and dispensationalist author; he considers himself a Christian Zionist. According to Lindsey, the prophetic event that officially begins the end times is the regathering of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland to form an independent nation after a prolonged worldwide dispersion. He states that the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 is the fulfillment of this major prophecy. His television show, *International Intelligence Briefing*, was pulled from the Trinity Broadcasting Network for the entire month of December (2005) because, in part, it placed Arabs in a negative light.



583 **Oswald Chambers** (1874–1917) – lecturer, missionary, and preacher of the “deeper life.” Born in Aberdeen, Scotland, the fourth son of a Baptist preacher, Chambers was converted under the preaching of Charles Spurgeon. At age 27 he underwent a second spiritual crisis that he described as baptism in the Holy Spirit. Chambers studied art in London and Edinburgh but abandoned a promising career to train at Dunoon College for the Baptist ministry. Most of the public ministry of Oswald Chambers was with the Pentecostal League of Prayer, especially after the League’s founder, Howard Hooker, died (1909). Chambers visited “Holiness” camps in the United States and Japan before becoming principal of the Bible Training College, Clapham Common, London (1911–1915). With his wife (Gertrude Hobbs) and daughter, he ministered to British troops in Egypt, where a sudden illness ended his life. More than 40 titles of Chambers’s works have been published posthumously. The most popular, *My Utmost for His Highest*, is a compilation of talks Chambers delivered at the Bible Training College and at YMCA huts in Egypt.



584 **David Livingstone** (1813–1873) – Scottish missionary in central Africa who explored the course of the Zambezi River and the sources of the Nile River. He spent some 30 years mapping 30,000 square miles of Africa south of the Equator, and his published books and journals aroused opinion against slave-trading while simultaneously encouraging European missionaries and explorers to penetrate the equatorial heartlands of Africa.



From 1844 on, Livingstone made many journeys, crossing the Kalahari Desert, and traveling to the Victoria Falls and the Zambezi River. In 1858,

in charge of a government expedition for exploring (and exploiting) the Zambezi River system, he located Lake Nyasa. In his last expedition to Africa, for the Royal Geographical Society, he explored the watershed between Lakes Nyasa and Tanganyika, and the sources of the Nile. He pushed onward from Lake Nyasa to Lake Tanganyika over land that had not been explored by the Europeans, and in the process he located Lakes Mweru and Bangweulu, and saw the Lualaba, which he believed to be the head river of the Nile. He returned, ill, to Ujiji on Lake Tanganyika, where he was found by Henry Stanley, with whom he later explored the northern part of Lake Tanganyika. After Stanley left, he made another search for the source of the Nile, but died during the trip.

Charles George Gordon (1833–1885) – English general, famous for his ten-month military stand-off in al-Khartūm, Sudan. He served in the Crimean War (1854), then entered the employment of the Chinese Manchu government (1860–1865). His explorations for colonialist ends, and his quelling of the Taiping rebellion (1864), earned him the nickname “Chinese Gordon.” From China he went to Egypt (1874) and became governor of the Sudan (1877–1880), where he attempted to suppress “slave trading,” according to European historians. After some time in South Africa, he was sent to the Sudan again in 1884 to rescue Egyptian garrisons cut off by the forces of the Sudanese revolutionary al-Mahdī, who had roused Sudan against the Egyptian governors — British proxies ruling over Sudan in 1882. Gordon was besieged in al-Khartūm, and after 10 months of assaults on the Sudanese, was killed shortly before a relief force arrived.



Gordon's character was complex, per European historians. They say he was something of an oddity with a marked sense of his own destiny — an unconventional and passionate evangelical, imbued with a personal theology that was intense, mystical, and ascetic. He had been known to stick religious tracts onto walls, and even throw them out of train windows. He also showed a particular interest in boys. Like two other unscrupulous imperial invaders of his time, Kitchener and Cecil Rhodes, Gordon was celibate. What this almost certainly meant was that Gordon had unresolved homosexual inclinations. In England he was a hero of the Victorian public.

Henry Havelock (1795–1857) – British missionary-general who is particularly associated with India and his recapture of Cawnpore (Kanpur) from “rebels” during the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Born at Ford Hall, Bishopwearmouth, he was the second of four brothers, all of whom entered the British army. While in the military, he be-



came a student of military history and the art of war, which, it is said, helped him substantially in turning back the mutineers. He died of dysentery in Lucknow (1857).

- 585 **Oliver Cromwell** (1599–1658) – English soldier and statesman, born in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire. Educated at Huntingdon and Cambridge, he studied law in London; at some point during his education, he became a convinced Puritan. He sat in both the Short and the Long Parliaments (1640), and when war broke out in 1642, he fought for the parliament at Edgehill. After he developed and trained his unconquerable Ironsides, which combined rigid discipline with strict morality, his cavalry secured the victory at Marston Moor (1644). Under the command of Lord Fairfax of Cameron, he led the New Model Army to decisive success at Baseby (1645). Cromwell quelled the insurrection in Wales in support of Charles I, and defeated the invading army of Hamilton. He then brought the king to trial, and was one of the signatories of his death warrant (1649). Having established the Commonwealth, Cromwell suppressed the Levellers, Ireland (1649–1650), and the Scots (under Charles II) at Dunbar (1650), and Worcester (1651). He dissolved the Rump of the Long Parliament (1653), and after the failure of his Barebone’s Parliament, established a Protectorate (1653). He refused the offer of the crown in 1657. At home he reorganized the national church, upheld toleration, and gave Scotland and Ireland parliamentary representation. Under him the Commonwealth became the head and champion of Protestant Europe. He was succeeded by his son Richard Cromwell (1626–1712), who was forced into French exile in 1659.



- 586 **Benjamin Disraeli** (1804–1881) – First Earl of Beaconsfield, British Conservative politician and novelist. Elected to parliament in 1837 after four unsuccessful attempts, he was laughed at as a dandy (a man unduly devoted to style, neatness, and fashion in dress and appearance); when his maiden speech was shouted down, he said, “The time will come when you will hear me.” Ultimately, as a public servant, he became Chancellor of the Exchequer under Lord Derby (1852, 1858–1859, and 1866–1868), and then prime minister (1868 and 1874–1880). His imperialist policies brought India directly under the British crown, and he was personally responsible for purchasing control of the Suez Canal. The central Conservative party organization is his creation. His popular political novels, including *Coningsby* (1844) and *Sybil* (1845), reflect an interest in social reform.



Excluded from Robert Peel's government of 1841–1846, Disraeli formed his Young England group to keep a critical eye on Peel's Conservatism and gradually came to be recognized as the leader of the Conservative party in the Commons. During the next 20 years the Conservatives formed short-lived minority governments in 1852, 1858–1859, and 1866–1868, with Lord Derby as prime minister and Disraeli as Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the Commons. On Lord Derby's retirement in 1868 Disraeli became prime minister, but a few months later he was defeated by William Gladstone in a general election. In 1874 Disraeli took office for the second time. Though some useful, but forgettable, reform measures were carried out, the outstanding feature of the Disraeli government policy was its imperialism. Disraeli purchased from the Khedive of Egypt a controlling interest in the Suez Canal, conferred on the Queen the title of Empress of India, and sent the Prince of Wales on the first royal tour of that country. See also **Endnote 384** in Volume 5 **Endnote 352** in Volume 7.

Henry John Temple (1784–1865) – 3rd Viscount Palmerston, British statesman and Liberal prime minister (1855–1858 and 1859–1865), born in Broadlands, Hampshire. He studied at Cambridge, became a Tory MP in 1807, served as secretary of war (1809–1828), joined the Whigs (1830), and was three times foreign secretary (1830–1834, 1835–1841, and 1846–1851). His brusque speech, assertive manner, and robust defenses of what he considered to be British interests abroad secured him the name of Firebrand Palmerston. His frequently xenophobic foreign policy won him substantial popular support in Britain. He is associated with “Gunboat Diplomacy,” whereby Britain employed, or threatened to employ, its unchallengeable naval supremacy to resolve overseas differences in its favor. His tenure of the Home Office in Aberdeen's coalition (1852) did not enhance his reputation, but eventually he became prime minister in 1855 after the government's lack of success in the early stages of the Crimean War led to widespread criticism. He prosecuted the Crimean War unchallenged, and he became Britain's oldest prime minister. A sturdy opponent of further parliamentary reform in the 1860s, he died in office.



587 **David Lloyd George** (1863–1945) – 1st Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor, British Liberal statesman and prime minister (1916–1922), born in Manchester, Greater Manchester, of Welsh parentage. He studied in Wales, became a solicitor, and in 1890, as a strong supporter of Home Rule, an MP for Caernarvon Boroughs (a seat he was to hold for 55 years). He was President of the Board of Trade (1905–1908), and Chancellor of the Exchequer (1908–1915). His “people's budget” of 1909–1910 was rejected by the House

of Lords, and led to a constitutional crisis and the Parliament Act of 1911, which removed the Lords' power of veto. He became minister of munitions (1915), secretary for war (1916), and superseded Asquith as coalition prime minister, carrying on a forceful war policy. After WWI, he continued as head of a coalition government dominated by Conservatives. He negotiated with Sinn Fein, and conceded the Irish Free State (1921) — a measure that brought his downfall. Following the 1931 general election, he led a “family” group of Independent Liberal MPs. He was made an earl in 1945.



588 **Indian Mutiny of 1857** – also called the **Sepoy Mutiny**; widespread but unsuccessful rebellion against British rule in India (1857–1858) that began in Meerut by Indian troops (sepoys) in the service of the British East India Company, and spread to Delhi, Agra, Kanpur, and Lucknow. In India it is often called the First War of Independence. The immediate result of the mutiny was a general housecleaning of the Indian administration and military. The East India Company was abolished in favor of the direct rule of India by the British government. In concrete terms, this did not mean much, but from this time all serious hope of a revival of the past or an exclusion of the West diminished. The traditional structure of Indian society began to break down and was eventually superseded by a westernized class system, which persists to this day.

Khyber Pass – a gorge through the Safed Koh mountain range on the frontier between Pakistan and Afghanistan. A route favored through history by both traders and invaders, it is 45 km (28 miles) long, and reaches heights of 1,280 m (3518 ft). The present road was built by the British during the Afghan Wars, when the Pass was the scene of several clashes.



589 **Horatio Herbert Kitchener** (1850–1916) – 1st Earl Kitchener (of Khartoum and Broome), British field marshal land statesman, born near Ballylongford, County Kerry, Ireland. He joined the Royal Engineers in 1871, and served in Palestine (1874), Cyprus (1878), and the Sudan (1883). By the final rout of the ruler at Omdurman (1898), he secured the Sudan for Egypt, and was made a peer. Successively chief-of-staff and commander-in-chief in South Africa (1900–1902), he brought the Boer War to an end, and was



made viscount. He then became commander-in-chief in India (1902–1909), consul-general in Egypt (1911), and secretary for war (1914), for which he organized manpower on a vast scale (“Kitchener armies”). He was lost with HMS Hampshire, which sank when it hit mines near the Orkney Islands, close to Scotland. Some of his biographers have concluded that Kitchener was a latent or active homosexual. Patrick Barkham, a contemporary journalist, remarked that Kitchener “...has the failing acquired by most of the Egyptian officers, a taste for buggery.”

- 590 **Rupert Chawner Brooke** (1887–1915) – poet, born in Rugby, Warwickshire. He studied at Cambridge, then traveled in Europe, the United States, and the South Seas. His *Poems* appeared in 1911 and 1914, and his *Other Poems* were published posthumously. The gentle lyricism of his work, together with his “handsome appearance” and untimely death, made him a favorite poet among young people in the interwar period. A commissioned officer, he died on Skyros (a Greek island) on his way to the Dardanelles, and was buried there.



- 591 **Edmund Henry Hynman Allenby** (1861–1936) – 1st Viscount Allenby, British field marshal, born in Brackenhurst, Nottinghamshire. As commander of the 3rd Army during the Battle of Arras (1917), he came close to breaching the German line. He then took command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, and conducted a capable campaign against the Turks in Palestine and Syria, occupying Jerusalem, Damascus, and Aleppo (1917–1918), and securing an armistice. He was made a viscount in 1919.



- 592 (**Ferdinand Victor**) **Eugene Delacroix** (1798–1863) – painter and leader of the Romantic movement, born in Charenton, France. He exhibited his *Dante and Virgil in Hell* at the Paris Institute (1822), following this with *The Massacre at Chios* at the Louvre (1823). These paintings, with their loose drawing and vivid coloring, aroused a storm of criticism. In his later work he moved even further away from traditional treatment in his canvases of historical and dramatic scenes, often violent or macabre in subject, such as *Liberty Guiding the People* (1831, Louvre).



Godfrey of Bouillon (circa 1060–1100) – Duke of Lower Lorraine (1089–1095), and leader of the First Crusade, born in Baisy, Belgium. He

served under emperor Henry IV against Rudolf of Rheinfelden (Duke of Swabia) and in 1084 in the expedition against Rome. He was elected one of the principal commanders of the First Crusade, and later became its chief leader. After the occupation of Jerusalem (1099) he was proclaimed king, but he refused the crown, accepting only the title Defender of the Holy Sepulcher.



Richard I (1157–1199) – also known as **Richard Coeur de Lion** or **Richard the Lionheart**; King of England (1189–1199), born in Oxford, Oxfordshire, the third son of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. Of his 10-year reign, he spent only five months in England, devoting himself to crusading, and defending the Angevin lands in France. Already recognized as an outstanding soldier, he took Messina (1190), Cyprus, and Acre (1191) during the Third Crusade, and advanced to within sight of Jerusalem. On the return journey, he was arrested at Vienna (1192), and remained a prisoner of the German Emperor Henry VI until he agreed to be ransomed (1194). The rest of his reign was occupied in warfare against Philip II of France, while the government of England was conducted by the justiciar (British high judicial officer), Hubert Walter. Richard was mortally wounded while besieging the castle of Chalus, Aquitaine.



593 **Siegfried (Lorraine) Sassoon (1886–1967)** – poet and novelist, born in Brenchley, Kent. WWI, in which he served, gave him a hatred of war, fiercely expressed in his *Counterattack* (1918) and *Satirical Poems* (1926). He also wrote several autobiographical works, such as *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928). His later poetry became increasingly devotional, and he became a Catholic in 1957.

Robert (Ranke) Graves (1895–1985) – poet and novelist, born in London. He studied at Oxford, served in the trenches in WWI, became professor of English at Cairo, and after 1929 lived mainly in Majorca. His best-known novels are *I, Claudius* and its sequel, *Claudius the God* (both in 1934), which were adapted for television in 1976. He wrote several autobiographical works, notably *Goodbye to All That* (1929) and *Occupation Writer* (1950); published critical essays; carried out Greek and Latin translations; and was professor of poetry at Oxford (1961–1966). His *Collected Poems* (1975) draws on more than 20 volumes.



Wilfred Owen (1893–1918) – poet, born in Oswestry, Shropshire and killed in action on the Western Front (WWI). His poems, expressing a horror of the cruelty and waste of war, were edited by his friend Siegfried Sassoon in 1920. Several of them were set to music by Benjamin Britten in his *War Requiem* (1962).

594 **Joachim of Fiore** or **Joachim of Floris** (circa 1135–1202) – mystic, born in Calabria, Italy. In 1177 he became abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Corazzo, and later founded a stricter order, the Ordo Florensis, which was absorbed by the Cistercians in 1505. He is known for his mystical interpretation of history, recognizing three ages of increasing spirituality: the Age of the Father (the Old Testament), the Age of the Son (the New Testament and the period to 1260), and the Age of the Spirit, a period of perfect liberty that would emerge thereafter.

595 Kevin Phillips, *American Theocracy: the Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century*. (New York, New York: Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 2006), pp. 250–62.

596 Narrated by Abū Bakr ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān and 'Urwaḥ ibn al-Zubayr, who told it to Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib; and recorded by Abū Ḥātim.

597 Narrated by Sa'id ibn Jubayr and recorded by Abū Ḥātim.

598 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdah wa-al-Sharī'ah wa-al-Manhaj*, Volume 7. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āshir, 1411AH), p. 7 (originally found in *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* by al-Suyūṭī, and *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* by al-Wāḥidī).

599 Ibid.

600 **al-Yarmūk** – a perennial tributary of the Jordan River, which, for most of its course, forms the boundary between Syria and Jordan. It has become famous in Islamic history for the battle in 15AH (636CE) of the Muslims under Khālīd ibn al-Walīd against a numerically superior force of the Byzantines. The Muslim victory led to the liberation of Syria.



601 **Najrān** – town in southwestern Arabia along the Yemen frontier. It is thought to be mentioned in the Qur’an (85:4–9). In 9AH (630CE), the Christians sent a delegation to the Prophet (ﷺ) in Madinah and were permitted to practise their religion against payment of a tribute and the contribution of 2,000 robes. During the *khilāfah* of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, many Christians emigrated to a locality not far from al-Kūfah, called al-Najrānīyah. See also **Endnote 1** in Volume 4.

602 Ismā‘īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, *Islam and the Problem of Israel*. (London, UK: Islamic Council of Europe, 1980), pp. 1–3.

603 **Vikings** or **Norsemen** – medieval Scandinavian sea warriors. They traded with and raided Europe in the 8th–11th centuries, and often settled there. In France the Vikings took over Normandy. Under Sweyn I they conquered England (1013), and Sweyn’s son Canute was king of England as well as Denmark and Norway. In the east they established the first Russian state and founded Novgorod. They reached the Byzantine Empire in the south, and in the west sailed the seas to Ireland, Iceland, Greenland, and North America.

In their narrow, shallow-draft, highly maneuverable longships, the Vikings penetrated far inland along rivers. They plundered for gold and land, and the need for organized resistance accelerated the growth of the feudal system. In England and Ireland they were known as “Danes.” They created settlements, for example in York, and greatly influenced the development of the English language. The Vikings had a sophisticated literary culture, and an organized system of government with an assembly. As “Normans” they achieved a second conquest of England in 1066. The Swedish Varangians were invited to settle differences among the Slav chieftains in Russia (862CE). The Varangians also formed the imperial guard in Constantinople.

604 **Cluny** – a monastic house founded in 909CE under the direction of Berno, which became the source for a vast reformation of monasticism. Berno ruled at Cluny until 926CE, and then a series of able and long-lived abbots continued his work. Thus, over a period of two centuries Cluny was ruled by six abbots. Although the seventh abbot was not of the caliber of his predecessors, the eighth, Peter the Venerable, regained much of what had been lost.

The influence of Cluny was far-reaching. Soon, hundreds of “second Clunys” were founded and placed under the direction of the mother house. Although they did not form an order in the strict sense, their connection through their common abbot was such that it is customary to speak of the “order of Cluny.” There were also Cluniac houses for women, of which the first was Marcigny.

The main occupation of the Cluniacs was the Divine Office, to which they devoted so much time that at the apex of the movement 138 psalms

were said every day. This led to the abandonment of manual labor, which was one of the pillars of Benedictine monasticism, and therefore other movements of monastic reformation arose. The ideals of Cluny made such an impact on the Church at large that the reformation of Gregory VII was largely patterned after them.

605 Roland Herbert Bainton, *The Horizon History of Christianity*. (New York, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964), pp. 174–80.

606 **Pope Urban II** (circa 1042–1099) – pope (1088–1099). He launched the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont in France (1095). See also **Endnote 414** in Volume 10.

607 **Alexius I Comnenus** (1056–1118) – Byzantine emperor (1081–1118), the founder of the Comnenian dynasty, born in Constantinople. He strengthened the weakened Byzantine state, and defeated the tip-and-run Turks and Normans. However, his achievement received a major setback when his empire was invaded by the myriad warriors of the First Crusade to Palestine (1096). See also **Endnote 414** in Volume 10.

Seljuks or **Seljuqs** – a family of warrior soldiers who rose to prominence and conquered much of Asia Minor in the 11th–12th centuries. They were adherents of Islam, and became established as sultans in the area of present-day Syria and eastern Turkey. Their decline in the 13th century was brought on by Mongol pressure from the east and their defeat at Kosedagh.

608 Roland H. Bainton, *The Horizon History of Christianity*, pp. 174–80.

609 Ibid.

610 Ibid.

611 **Frank** – member of a group of Germanic peoples prominent in Europe in the 3rd–9th centuries. Believed to have originated in Pomerania on the Black Sea, they had settled on the Rhine by the 3rd century, spread into the Roman Empire by the 4th century, and gradually conquered most of Gaul, Italy, and Germany under the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties. The kingdom of the West Franks became France, the kingdom of the East Franks became Germany.

The Salian (western) Franks conquered Roman Gaul during the 4th–5th centuries. Their ruler, Clovis, united the Salians with the Ripuarian (eastern) Franks, and they were all converted to Christianity. The agriculture of the Merovingian dynasty (named after Clovis' grandfather, Merovech)

was more advanced than that of the Romans, and they introduced the three-field system. The Merovingians conquered most of western and central Europe, and lasted until the 8th century when the Carolingian dynasty was founded under Charlemagne. The kingdom of the West Franks was fused by the 9th century into a single people with the Gallo-Romans, speaking the modified form of Latin that became modern French.

612 Roland H. Bainton, *The Horizon History of Christianity*, pp. 174–80.

Durazzo – Italian name of Durres, a seaport in West Albania, on the Adriatic; important ancient city.

613 **Bosporus** or **Bosphorus** – in Turkish, it is **Karadeniz Bogazi**; narrow strait separating European from Asiatic Turkey, and connecting the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara. Its length is 32 km (20 miles) and its minimum width is 640 m (2,100 ft). At its narrowest point are two famous castles, Anadolu Hisar (1390) on the Asian side, and Rumeli Hisar (1452) on the European side. It has been an area of great strategic importance.



Nicaea – ancient city in northwest Asia Minor; its name corresponds with the Nicene Creed, formulated there in 325CE.

614 Roland H. Bainton, *The Horizon History of Christianity*, pp. 174–80.

615 **Edessa** – ancient city in northwest Iraq (southeast Turkey), on the modern site of al-Ruhā or Urfa; an early center of Christianity and the capital of a principality under the Crusaders.

616 **Toulouse** – a city in southern France; same as the ancient **Tolosa**.

Antioch – **Anṭākiyah** in Arabic and **Antakya** in Turkish; a city in southern Turkey; capital of the ancient Kingdom of Syria 300–64BCE. See also **Endnote 203** in Volume 9.

617 **Tripoli** – Mediterranean city on the Syrian coastline; nowadays part of the country of Lebanon.

618 Roland H. Bainton, *The Horizon History of Christianity*, pp. 174–80.

619 **Norman** – branch of the Norsemen or Scandinavians who in the 10th century conquered Normandy.

Sicily – largest island in the Mediterranean, currently constituting a region of Italy, and separated from the southwest tip of the mainland by the Strait of Messina.

620 Roland H. Bainton, *The Horizon History of Christianity*, pp. 174–80.

621 Ibid.

622 Ibid.

623 Ibid.

624 Ibid.

625 **Essenes** – according to Hebrew sources the word's etymology is obscure, but it could possibly be from the Syriac word *hasya* meaning *pious*; religious sect in Palestine at the close of the Second Temple Period. In religious outlook, they were close to the Pharisees but had their own specific beliefs and customs. It is said that they believed in the immortality of the soul and in reward and punishment but not in physical resurrection. They opposed slavery and private property, and lived an abstemious (non-indulgent), communal life. Before meals they immersed themselves in water. Celibacy was common but some married in order to perpetuate mankind. Their chief occupation was farming; they opposed animal sacrifice and brought only offerings of flour and oil to the Temple. Novices underwent a three-year initiation and were only admitted as full members after swearing not to reveal the sect's secrets. The group was not altogether remote from political life, even taking part in the wars against the Romans. In the time of Philo of Alexandria (circa 25BCE–50CE), they numbered 4,000 and lived in several towns and villages. Nothing is heard of them after the destruction of the Second Temple. Some information about the Essenes cast them as a philosophical sect on the Hellenistic pattern. See also **Endnote 311** in Volume 7.

Stoicism – philosophical movement that arose in ancient Athens and remained important for 500 years. It was one of the most influential of the ancient philosophical schools, but only fragments of its early writings remain. The Stoics' aim was to understand the universe as macrocosm and human life and culture as microcosm. Heraclitus of Ephesus (circa 535–475BCE) was the forerunner with his doctrines concerning the creative nature of reason

in people and the universe, the subordination of the individual to the laws of nature, and the fact that all things are in a process of change.

The Stoics take their name from the Painted Colonnade (*stoa*) from which Zeno, their founder, lectured in Athens around 300BCE. He emphasized the centrality of human character as evidenced in ethical and political action, and divided philosophy into three parts: logic, physics (cosmogony), and ethics. During the middle period, 2nd and 3rd centuries BCE, the movement was centered in Rome, where Diogenes (circa 400–325BCE) had lectured. There was at this time a modification in theme from the ascetic ideal of the wise person to the idea of the potential from moral progress in all people.

The late Stoic period (100–200CE) is distinguished by the life and writings of Seneca (circa 4BCE–65CE), Epictetus (circa 55–135CE), and the emperor Marcus Aurelius (121–180CE), whose *Meditations* are still accessible. He realized that Stoicism and Christianity were rivals in their appeal as the bases for popular lifestyles. During this period, the Stoics placed less emphasis on natural science and more on moral philosophy: inward self-control and exemplary citizenship. Finding truth was both the desire and goal of the Stoics. They defined the formative creative power of the world — God — as Logos, Providence, and Order, and understood the course of the universe to be cyclical and timeless. In this universe God and world are autonomous and orderly. Those who live in harmony with this order would find peace and well-being. This state could be achieved through virtue (which includes intelligence devoted to knowing good from evil), bravery, justice, and self-control. And all people, including slaves, having the divine spark, should aspire to be of service to others.

Stoicism has influenced Christianity, Judaism, and indirectly some trends within Islam. It may have influenced medieval political theory and the Renaissance tradition of Christian humanism. Its themes are still important for Western modern definitions of moral living. See also **Endnote 78** in Volume 4 and **Endnote 604** in Volume 8.

Gnosticism – from the Greek word *gnosis* for *knowledge*; a system of belief that became prominent in 2nd-century Christianity, but which may have had earlier, non-Christian roots. Gnostics believed that they were an elect group, saved through acquiring secret revealed knowledge about cosmic origins and the true destiny of the spirit within people; in later forms, this knowledge was imparted by a heavenly redeemer figure. Gnosticism was considered a heresy by the early Church fathers, particularly for its appeal to secret traditions, its deprecatory view of the Creator-God, and its docetic view of Christ (an ancient heresy saying that Jesus (✝) lacked full humanity). See also **Endnote 373** in Volume 5.

Pythagoreanism – school of Greek philosophy named after its preeminent member, **Pythagoras**, an Ionian Greek, born in the 6th century BCE. Pythagoras was one of the most influential of the pre-Socratic philosophers. He founded a famous society in southern Italy, which continued in existence for over a century. It is difficult to distinguish the teachings of Pythagoras, who left no writings, from those of his school because the society was sworn to secrecy, and the disciples, in esteem for their master, attributed their own ideas to him.



For the Pythagorean school, philosophy was a way of life devoted to the salvation of the soul. The society engaged in many dietary practices and other ascetic activity as a means of purification. The pursuit of knowledge, especially mathematics, which held a mystical significance, was seen as the highest form of purification. Pythagoras taught that by studying the cosmos, or the world's orderly perfection, one creates order in the soul. The Pythagoreans saw the nature and order of things in their mathematical structure. Things were observed to be made up of their numbers, just as other pre-Socratics saw the fundamental nature of things as water or fire. The ultimate principles were limit and the unlimited, which were equated with good and bad, respectively. There followed ten pairs of fundamental opposites, including right and left, male and female, and so forth. The universe was thus perceived as a harmony of opposites. The cosmos or order was achieved by the imposition limit, the number series, on the unlimited. The Pythagorean school made important contributions to arithmetic and geometry.

Manichaeism – religion founded by a person considered by some to be a prophet, **Mani** (Manichaeus in Latin, circa 216–276CE). Despite persecution, Manichaeism spread and flourished until about the 10th century. Based on the concept of dualism, it held that the material world is evil, an invasion of the spiritual realm of light by the powers of darkness; particles of divine light imprisoned in evil matter were to be rescued by messengers such as Jesus (✝), and finally by Mani himself. Mani proclaimed his creed in 241CE at the Persian court. Returning from missions to China and India, he was put to death at the instigation of the Zoroastrian priesthood. See also **Endnote 114** in Volume 6 and **Endnote 156** in Volume 9.



626 Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey (editors), *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society*. (New York, New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 58–60.

627 Ibid.

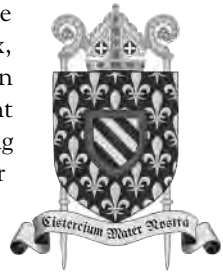
628 **St. Antony** or **St. Anthony of Egypt** (circa 251–356CE) – known as the Great; religious hermit, one of the founders of Christian monasticism, born in Koman, Upper Egypt. After selling all his possessions to the poor, he spent 20 years in the desert, where he withstood a famous series of temptations, often represented in later art. In 305CE he left his retreat and founded a monastery near Memphis and Arsinoe. Around 355CE, although over 100 years of age, he made a journey to Alexandria to dispute with the Arians, but retired soon thereafter to his desert home. His memory is commemorated on January 17th with a feast.



629 **St. Benedict of Nursia** (circa 480–547CE) – founder of Western monasticism, born in Nursia, Italy. At about the age of 14 he withdrew from society, living as a hermit. The fame of his piety led to his being appointed the abbot of a monastery at Vicovaro; but he did not find the rule strict enough, and so retreated to Subiaco, where he founded 12 small monastic communities that followed the rule he devised (circa 515CE). He ultimately established a monastery on Monte Cassino, which became one of the most famous in Italy. His Benedictine rule in due course became the common rule of all Western monasticism.



Cistercians – religious order formed by Benedictine monks, in particular, **St. Robert of Molesme** in Citeaux, France (1098), under a strict rule, with an emphasis on solitude, poverty, and simplicity. The order was prominent in the European Middle Ages, with leaders including **Bernard of Clairvaux**. By the 13th century it had over 500 houses in Europe, but thereafter declined. In the 17th century it was divided into communities of Common Observance and of Strict Observance. The latter were revived in France after the French Revolution by Trappists (former members of the monastery of La Trappe). Common Observance is now prominent in the United States and parts of Western Europe, with an abbot-general in Rome; Strict Observance, with a mother-house in Citeaux and an abbot in Rome, is active in France, Switzerland, England, and Poland.



Carthusians – Roman Catholic monastic order founded in 1084 by **Bruno of Cologne** in Chartreuse, near Grenoble, France; properly known as the Order of Carthusians (abbreviated Ocart). The monks practice strict absti-

nence and live as solitaries; lay brothers live in a community. Membership is small, but the order maintains houses in many parts of Europe. At the mother-house, La Grande Chartreuse, a famous liqueur is distilled, the profits being distributed to local charities.

Franciscans – Catholic order of friars, Friars Minor or Gray Friars, founded in 1209 by **St. Francis of Assisi**. Its subdivisions included the strict Observants; the Conventuals, who were allowed to own property corporately; and the Capuchins, founded in 1529. Notable scholars, among them the English scientist Roger Bacon, belonged to the Franciscan order. A female order, the Poor Clares, was founded by St. Clare (1215); and lay people who adopt a Franciscan regime without abandoning the world form a third order, called the Tertiaries. See also **Endnote 398** in Volume 7.



Dominicans – Dominic of Guzman (1170–1221), better known as **St. Dominic**, was the founder of the Order of Preachers, commonly called Dominicans. He was born into an aristocratic Spanish family and was a canon of the cathedral of Palencia when he and his bishop traveled to southern France. There he was profoundly disturbed by the popularity of the Albigenses and by the inability of the orthodox leadership to refute them persuasively. He became convinced that



such refutation had to be based on both sound scholarship and austerity of life. The result was the Order of Preachers, who made vows of poverty and devoted their lives to study and preaching. In contrast to the Franciscans, whose vows of poverty they emulated, from the start the Dominicans wished to establish themselves in universities and other centers of learning. Also, since poverty for them was a means to a mission, and not the core of their self-understanding, they did not undergo the divisions and controversies regarding absolute poverty that rocked the Franciscan order after the death of St. Francis. Also, they soon amplified their mission and began dealing with not only the Albigensian threat, but with all the various intellectual challenges that resulted from the reintroduction of Aristotle into the West. In this regard, the most noteworthy Dominican theologians were **Albertus Magnus** and his disciple **Thomas Aquinas**.

The Dominicans also did remarkable missionary work. Their most famous preacher among Jews in Spain was Vincent Ferrer, and, among Muslims in the Levant, William of Tripoli. Soon they had missionaries as far as India and China. With the discovery of the New World (the Americas), their field of action was greatly increased. In the Spanish and Portuguese

colonies, they often took the side of the Indians against the Spanish who oppressed them. Most famous for such action and for strong advocacy for the Indians before Spanish authorities was Bartolome de Las Casas. See also **Endnote 134** in Volume 3.

630 Paul Barry Clarke, *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society*, pp. 58–60.

631 Ibid.

632 **St. Ignatius of Loyola** (1491–1556) – originally Inigo Lopez de Recalde; theologian and founder of the **Jesuits**, born at his ancestral castle of Loyola in the Basque province of Guipuzcoa, Spain. He became a soldier, was wounded, and while convalescing read the lives of Christ and the saints. In 1522 he went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, studied in Alcala, Salamanca, and Paris, and in 1534 founded with six associates the Society of Jesus. Ordained in 1537, he went to Rome in 1539, where the new order was approved by the pope. The author of the influential *Spiritual Exercises*, he was canonized in 1622.



633 Paul Barry Clarke, *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society*, pp. 58–60.

634 Ibid.

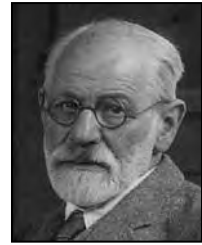
635 **Friedrich Nietzsche** (1844–1900) – one of the most influential philosophers in the contemporary Euro-American world. By combining the Dionysian (will and emotion) with the Apollonian (intellect), he diverted philosophy from strict rationalism, and may be seen along with Soren Kierkegaard as one of the pioneers of existentialism. He stood opposed to all ready-made conventional values in morals, religion, and art.



The starting point of Nietzsche's philosophy is, in a sense, the "death of god." According to Nietzsche, man must recognize the universe to be a collection of purely contingent facts. There is no providence, no goal, no center, no fixed values. It is as if the earth has been set adrift and wanders through endless space. Given sufficient time, everything will return to where it began and repeat the process. This is the doctrine of eternal recurrence. These teachings earned Nietzsche the reputation of being an advocate of nihilism. But against this was his affirmation of life. Only the death of god and the abolition of the divine rule can liberate man to achieve his true destiny. Nietzsche's hatred of Christianity arose from his belief that

it glorifies weakness and inhibits the stronger virtues. Humanity itself, according to Nietzsche, is only a transitional phase, between animality and the superman (*Übermensch*) of the future. This superman will create new values and, taking over control from the defunct god, will build a new world. In 1889, after suffering a mental breakdown, his writing career came to an abrupt end. His greatest work, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, has been esteemed for its literary as well as its philosophical merits. Refer also to **Endnote 44** in Volume 2, and **Endnote 284** in Volume 7.

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) – Austrian psychiatrist and founder of psychoanalysis. At the heart of his work was the belief that a complex of forgotten or deliberately buried impressions underlies all abnormal mental states. A cure, he said, could often be effected by revealing these hidden impressions, and he replaced hypnosis by making the patient talk through the free association of ideas. The technique remains the basis of psychoanalytical treatment today. Freud stated that children are not, as was supposed, unaffected by their sexuality until puberty, and frequently suffer from a desire to possess the parent of the opposite sex, based upon rivalry with the same sex parent — the Oedipus complex. Eventually he concluded that arrested infantile mental processes lay at the root of all serious personality disturbances in the adult. Freud saw four stages in the development of what he called the libido (which is often equated with sex, but which has a wider and more general significance): the oral stage, from birth, when the mouth is the organ of pleasure; the anal stage, beginning toward the end of the first year; and the third (phallic) and fourth (genital) stages, beginning at puberty. Failure of the libido to develop smoothly through these phases led, according to Freud, to aberrations of character or sexual perversion. Refer also to **Endnote 43** in Volume 2, **Endnote 19** in Volume 4, **Endnote 51** in Volume 6, and **Endnote 344** in Volume 10.



636 Friedrich Nietzsche, Francis Golffing (translator), *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals*. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1956), p. 299.

637 Ibid., pp. 214–30.

638 Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*. (New York, New York: Norton, 1961), pp. 83–96.

639 Paul Barry Clarke, *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society*, pp. 58–60.

- 640 Faculty of the Catholic University of America (editors), *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume 1*. (New York, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), p. 941.
- 641 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. (New York, New York: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 285–98.
- 642 Margaret R. Miles, *Practicing Christianity*. (New York, New York: Crossroad, 1990), pp. 103–04.
- 643 Margaret R. Miles, *Fullness of Life*. (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA: Westminster Press, 1981), pp. 155–63.

- 644 **Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi** (1869–1948) – progenitor of India’s independence and most notable exponent of “passive resistance” as a political and social revolutionary tactic. Gandhi, later known as the Mahatma (saint), was educated in London and called to the Bar in Bombay. After practicing there as a barrister, he went to South Africa and persuaded its Indian population to offer passive resistance to the Transvaal government’s discrimination against Indians. By 1914 he had won assurances from Jan Smuts of just treatment for Indian South Africans.



He returned to India to lead the Indian National Congress, which was demanding *swaraj* — home rule for India. Gandhi deprecated and discouraged terrorist methods, and used instead passive resistance, boycott of British goods, development of village industries and hunger strikes. As a result, he was imprisoned four times. By 1940, Gandhi’s aim had become complete independence for India, which was granted by Atlee’s Labor government (1947). His agreement to the partition of India and Pakistan was bitterly resented by Hindu extremists, one of whom assassinated him on January 30, 1948. The spiritual content of Gandhi’s political action should not obscure his considerable talents as an administrator and communicator of his views. His sponsorship of struggling and oppressed peoples made an international impact, and his campaign in India led to a moral reappraisal of British imperialism. Refer also to **Endnote 374** in Volume 7 and **Endnote 300** in Volume 10.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968) – American civil rights leader, whose methods of nonviolent demonstration and passive resistance ostensibly advanced the cause of Americans of African descent. A Baptist minister in Alabama, his leadership of a black boycott of public transport (1956) resulted in a desegregation order enabling blacks to sit with whites in public vehicles.

This success led him to organize and lead huge non-violent demonstrations and marches in Washington and elsewhere in support of then President Kennedy's civil rights legislation. He became head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and lent his weight and personal influence to support the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for his maintenance of nonviolence in his political work. King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. Refer also to **Endnote 87** in Volume 2, **Endnote 374** in Volume 7, and **Endnote 300** in Volume 10.



645 Paul Barry Clarke, *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society*, pp. 58–60.

646 Ibid.

647 Narrated by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and recorded by al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Ṭabarānī, Ibn Mardawayh, and Ibn 'Adī in his *al-Kāmil fī Du'afā' al-Rijāl*.

648 Narrated by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and recorded by Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Ibn Mardawayh.

نزلت هذه الآية (يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَحْمُوا طَيِّبَاتِ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ • وَكَلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَنْتُمْ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ) فِي رَهْطٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالُوا "تَقَطَّعَ مَذَاكِيرَنَا . وَنَتْرُكُ سَهْوَاتِ الدُّنْيَا . وَنَسْبَحُ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا يَفْعَلُ الرَّهْبَانُ!" فَبَلَغَ ذَلِكَ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ . فَأَرْسَلَ إِلَيْهِمْ فَذَكَرَ لَهُمْ ذَلِكَ . فَقَالُوا "نَعَمْ." فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "لَكُنِّي أَصَوْمٌ وَأَفْطَرُ . وَأَصْلِي . وَأَنَا . وَأَنْكَحُ النِّسَاءَ . فَمَنْ أَخَذَ بِسُنَّتِي فَهُوَ مِنِّي . وَمَنْ لَمْ يَأْخُذْ بِسُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي."

649 Narrated by Abū Mālik and recorded by Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī; also recorded by 'Abd ibn Ḥamīd and Abū Dāwūd in his *al-Marāsil ma'a al-Asānīd*.

650 Narrated by Umm al-Mu'minīn 'Ā'ishah and recorded in the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

ما بال أقوام يقول أحدهم كذا وكذا؟ لكنني أصوم وأفطر وأنام وأقوم وأكل اللحم وأتزوج النساء . فمن رغب عن سننتي فليس مني.

651 Recorded by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Ibn Abī Shaybah, al-Nisā'ī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Ḥabbān, Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī in his *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*.

652 Narrated by Abū Qulābah and recorded by ‘Abd al-Razzāq, Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, and Ibn al-Mundhir.

إِنَّمَا هَلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قِبَلِكُمْ بِالتَّشْدِيدِ. تَشَدَّدُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ فَتَشَدَّدَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ. فَأُولَئِكَ بِمَا نَبَاهُمْ فِي الْأَدْيَارِ وَالصَّوَامِعِ. فَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ. وَحُجُّوا وَاعْتَمَرُوا. وَاسْتَقِيمُوا يُسْتَقَمْ بِكُمْ.

653 There are some legalistic *fiqhī* divergences about whether the freed person should be a Muslim or not. Some opinions emphasize the Islamic priority of the person to be freed, whereas other opinions do not. This *tafsīr* has tried to avoid these types of details; suffice it to say that the different circumstances and variables of social environment and time may tip the argument one way or the other.

654 Whether these should be three consecutive days or not is another scholarly contention that lies beyond the scope of what is important insofar as this particular *tafsīr* is concerned.

655 **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)** – refer to **Endnote 216** in Volume 7.

Overeaters Anonymous (OA) – like AA, a 12-step program for people with problems related to food including, but not limited



to, compulsive overeating, binge eating disorder, bulimia, and anorexia. OA, whose only requirement for membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively, was founded by three women in 1960; the group’s headquarters today are in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, USA. OA estimates its membership at over 60,000 in about 6,500 groups meeting in over 75 countries. It has developed its own literature specifically for those who eat compulsively but also follows the pattern set by AA in the latter’s *Twelve Steps* and *Twelve Traditions*.

656 Some quotations found in Islamic literature have been attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ) in support of hunger and thirst, and this is all the more amazing and arresting because the Qur’an itself is outspoken in its thrust to eliminate hunger and thirst. The following quotes will give the reader an idea of how some people blunt their life capacities by succumbing to such notions. It is “reported” that the Prophet (ﷺ) said the following,

Struggle against yourselves by means of hunger and thirst; for its reward is like the reward of a mujāhid in the cause of Allah — there is no deed better in the sight of Allah than hunger and thirst.^a

No one will enter the dominion of heaven with a full stomach.^b

It is said that the Prophet (ﷺ) was asked, "Who is the best of people?" He replied, "Whoever restrains his food [consumption] and laughter and becomes satisfied with whatever there is available to cover his private part(s)."^c

The master of efforts is hunger and the humiliation of self is the wearing of wool.^d

The intellect is half of conformity to Allah, and scarce food is conformity to Allah.^e

The best of you in rank with Allah on the Day of Resurrection is he whose hunger is long and whose thoughts are deep; and the worst of you with Him is a compulsive sleeper and drinker.^f

Do not kill off your hearts by excessive consumption of food and drink; as the heart resembles flora that may die from over-watering.^g

These are a few narrations that are counted as hadiths in some Islamic history books. None of them are found in the reliable books of hadith, in which there appears to be only one hadith that resembles the general thrust for frugality in the consumption of food, "A committed Muslim eats with one abdomen and a denier [of Allah] eats with seven abdomens." In al-Bukhārī, the wording is, "A Muslim eats with one abdomen and a denier [of Allah] eats with seven abdomens," and in Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, and al-Nisā'ī, it is rendered as, "A Muslim drinks with one abdomen."^h Another reliable hadith captures this meaning in the words of Umm al-Mu'minīn 'Ā'ishah, "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) never satisfied his hunger with wheat bread for three consecutive days [from the beginning of his prophetic life] until he passed on."ⁱ

Having said this, it should be mentioned that the first seven of the above hadiths are to be found in Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī's most influential work, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn (Reinvigorating the Knowledge of the Dīn)*, which concentrates on the love of Allah (ﷻ). This is not a coincidence for it alludes to al-Ghazzālī's understanding that voluntary hunger and thirst in the form of a discipline to countervail indulgence can open the door of Allah's love a little wider; whereas imposed hunger and thirst, generally experienced by the poor and dislocated, can deprive a society of Allah's (ﷻ) love altogether. The force of all the *āyāt* in the Qur'an puts enduring pressure on *al-ladhīna āmanū* to do everything possible, up to and inclusive of jihad, to minimize or eliminate the latter. People of wealth and power are the ones who can afford to indulge themselves, and hence, in a society that honors its commitment to Allah (ﷻ), they should position themselves to voluntarily experience hunger and thirst, and to this end an annual oppor-

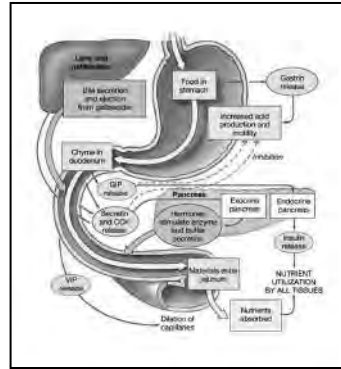
tunity is provided for them in the month of Ramaḍān. That is, during Ramaḍān, they should resolve to a certain discipline that should carry over to the rest of the year, thereby making available vital resources to those who do not historically have access to them. Consistent with this restructuring of society's attitude, poor people, who are the ones to generally become habituated to deprivation, should never have to experience hunger and thirst.

- a Recorded in al-Ghazzālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Volume 4, Chapter 4.
جاهدوا أنفسكم بالجوع والعطش فإن الأجر في ذلك كأجر المجاهد في سبيل الله وإنه ليس من عمل أحب إلى الله من جوع وعطش.
- b Ibid.
لا يدخل ملكوت السماء من ملأ بطنه.
- c Ibid.
يا رسول الله "أنتي التائب أفضل؟" قال "من قلّ مطعمه وضجّكهُ ورضي بما يستتر به عورته."
- d Ibid.
سجد الأعمال الجوع وذلل النفس لبأس الصوف.
- e Ibid.
الفكر نصف العبادة وقلّة الطعام هي العبادة.
- f Ibid.
أفضلكم عند الله منزلة يوم القيامة أطولكم جوعاً وتفكيراً وأبغضكم عند الله كلّ تؤومٍ وشروبٍ.
- g Ibid.
لا تميتوا القلوب بكثرة الطعام والشراب فإن القلب كالرّبع يموت إذا كثرت عليه الماء.
- h Narrated by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar and recorded by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, and al-Nisā'ī.
المؤمن يأكل في معي واحد . والكافر يأكل في سبعة أمعاء.
- i Narrated by Umm al-Mu'minīn 'Ā'ishah and recorded by Muslim.

657 **hypothalamus** – situated below the thalamus, a region of the vertebrate brain that has an important regulatory role regarding the internal physiological environment of the body, as in for example, the control of food intake, water balance, body temperature, and the release of hormones from the pi-

tuitary gland. It is also involved in the control of emotions by the limbic system. Refer also to **Endnote 52** in Volume 3.

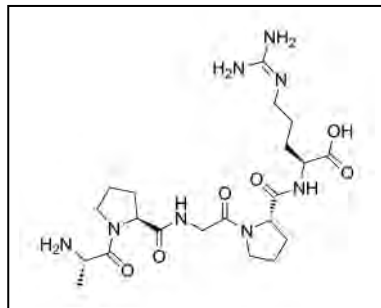
658 **cholecystokinin (pancreozymin)** – a hormone produced by the upper segment of the small intestine, and released into the bloodstream as food moves into the intestine from the stomach. Cholecystokinin (CCK) also stimulates the gallbladder to release bile and the pancreas to release digestive enzymes; causes the feeling of satiety after a meal; and directs the hunger center of the brain, located in the hypothalamus, to stop sending “hunger” signals. This process requires about 20 minutes. Bulimia (binge eating) is linked in some women to abnormally low levels of cholecystokinin after eating. Nonetheless, appetite and craving are complex phenomena, unlikely to be controlled by a single chemical signal or messenger.



659 **leptin** – a hormone produced by fat cells that helps regulate fat storage. It is a newly discovered protein that acts on the brain to decrease food intake. In experiments on obese mice that have a genetic defect in their ability to make this hormone, administering the genetically engineered hormone to their brains has helped to regulate their eating behavior and overall body fat. Even lean animals can be forced to reduce body fat with synthetically introduced leptin. Although the detailed steps by which this protein acts on the brain have not yet been worked out, it appears to be a key part of the body’s weight control system. Leptin is made by humans, and its effect in the body is being actively investigated. The discovery of this hormone supports the proposal that in some people, obesity represents a defect in the body’s metabolism and may eventually be treated to correct imbalanced body chemistry. This new research may eventually have a significant impact on the health of affluent classes of people, the overwhelming majority of whom are quickly becoming overweight.



660 **enterostatin** – a pentapeptide (small protein) that has been shown to selectively suppress fat intake or high-fat intake. Enterostatin can be created in the gastric mucosa and the mucosal epithelia of the small intestine and it appears in the lymph and circulation after a meal. Cumulatively, it initiates a sensation of fullness of stomach that could be the reason for its role in regulation of fat intake and reduction of body weight. Unlike most regulatory peptides, enterostatin is formed in the lumen of the intestine and hence is comparable with food-derived peptides. The mechanism for decreased fat intake is dependent on the cholecystokinin, opiate, and melanocortin pathways. Enterostatin also displays metabolic effects, such as inhibition of insulin secretion, lowering of serum cholesterol levels, and enhancement of memory. In enterostatin-deficient mice, elevated plasma cholesterol levels have been noted, pointing to the role of enterostatin in reducing blood lipids. Enterostatin may work as a feedback signal in promoting the regulation of fat intake and use of fat as an energy substrate.



661 Dr. Robert A. Ronzio, *The Encyclopedia of Nutrition and Good Health*. (New York, New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1997), pp. 231–32.

662 Ibid.

663 Ibid.

664 Ibid.

665 Ibid.

666 From al-Tirmidhī in his *al-Shamā'īl al-Muḥammadiyāh*.

667 **Suqyā** – a spring or a village at a distance of two days from Madinah.

668 Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm (better known as Tafsīr al-Manār)*, Volume 7. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Ma'rifaḥ, 1414AH), p. 36.

669 Ibid., pp. 37–38.

670 **18th Amendment to the US Constitution** – refer to pp. 44–45 and **Endnote 235** in Volume 7.

671 The term *bootlegger* may have originated in the American frontier custom of hiding bottles of illegal liquor in boot tops. The hiding place and name were also popular during the American Civil War (1861–1865). But the practice itself was discovered to be at an all-time high in 1930, when early in that year, 158 people from 31 crime organizations were arrested in Chicago as part of a major bootlegging operation that sold more than seven million gallons of whiskey to speakeasies all over the country, with a gross value of \$50 million.

672 Lorraine Glennon and Susan Roediger (editors), *Our Times: the Illustrated History of the 20th Century*. (New York, New York: Turner Publishing, Inc. and Century Books, Inc., 1995), p. 215.

673 Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār, Volume 7*, p. 50 (originally recorded by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nisā'ī).

674 To be found in the *ṣaḥīḥ* books of hadith (Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nisā'ī).

675 **roulette** – a casino game in which a ball is dropped onto a revolving wheel (roulette wheel) with numbered compartments, the players betting on the number at which the ball will come to rest.

blackjack – a casino card game in which players try to acquire cards with a face value as close as possible to 21 without going over; derived from 15th-century European games of chance.

craps – a gambling game played with two dice, chiefly in North America; a throw of 7 or 11 is a winning throw, and 2, 3, or 12 is a losing throw; any other throw must be repeated. In New Orleans, Louisiana (1813), it was adapted from the dice game Hazard that was imported to the New World by Bernard de Marigny.

676 Dr. Mark H. Beers et al. (editors), *The Merck Manual of Medical Information, Second Home Edition*. (West Point, Pennsylvania, USA: Merck & Co., Inc., 2003), pp. 647–650.

677 Ibid.

678 Ibid.

679 Ibid.

680 Ibid.

681 Ibid.

682 Ibid.

683 Ibid.

684 Ibid.

685 Ibid.

686 Ibid.

687 Ibid.

688 Ibid.

689 Phyllis A. Balch, *Prescription for Nutritional Healing*. (New York, New York: Penguin Group, 2010), pp. 170–77.

690 Ibid.

691 Ibid.

692 During the withdrawal period, which lasts a few days to a week, the appetite is reduced. Dietary support for the body's transition should concentrate on fluids and copious amounts of fruits and vegetables, preferably eaten raw to provide required nutrients and enzymes for rebuilding immunity. Raw fruits and vegetables are also alkaline and help reduce cravings. Water, diluted fruit and vegetable juices, warm broths, and soups aid the initial elimination of toxins. High-protein foods such as lentils, peas, beans, carrots, potatoes, and eggs are necessary to strengthen the weakened body. Additionally, foods rich in magnesium such as wheat germ or figs and cold-pressed vegetable oils such as flax seed oil are recommended to reduce withdrawal symptoms. Flax seed oil will also inhibit the body's production of inflammatory prostaglandins. The essential fatty acids available in cold-pressed flax seed oil and fish oils are vital for the body and are needed as a balance, particularly for the nervous system. Evening primrose oil has a similarly protective effect, especially its gamma-linolenic acid (GLA), which is helpful during withdrawal to prevent mood swings. Vitamin C is an excellent supplement during withdrawal, and combats the effects of toxins on the body. It eases the symptoms of withdrawal, reducing anxiety and improving rest and appetite. Vitamin E has also proven beneficial in reducing the side effects experienced during withdrawal.

During the detoxification period, which may last several weeks, keeping blood-sugar levels stable is often a problem. To do so, the recovering individual should avoid simple sugars, all refined food, soft drinks, and candy. Fried food, fast food, and ice cream, which are especially congesting and acid forming, are similarly off limits. Regular, small meals every few hours, based on complex carbohydrates such as grains, whole-grain pasta, purple and red potatoes, squashes, legumes or soy products will improve overall health and break the dependency cycle. Supplemental nutritional yeast will provide B vitamins and important minerals. Both vitamins C and E help the body to detoxify and are antioxidants that protect the body from free-radical damage.

Alcohol consumption causes numerous problems as a result of both nutrient deficiencies and the toxic effect it has on the liver, nerves, and other parts of the body. As the B vitamins are often depleted, supplementation is particularly important and helps reduce cravings. Special attention should be paid to vitamins B1, B6, folic acid (B9), and B12; vitamin B12 is best absorbed sublingually, under the tongue, or by injecting. B vitamins are essential for calming the nerves, combating stress, and helping to control cravings. The mineral magnesium, which helps to reduce withdrawal symptoms, is also often lacking and should be supplemented. Magnesium is particularly useful for treating addictions where irritability and cramps occur, since this mineral soothes cramps and calms the nervous system. Other common deficiencies include vitamins A, C, and E, and the minerals selenium and zinc, all of which are antioxidants that avert free-radical harm. Vitamin E protects the heart, and all these other nutrients protect the rest of the body, at least partly, from the toxic effects of alcohol. Chromium helps to stabilize blood-sugar levels and reduce cravings.

Cysteine, an amino acid, is used therapeutically in enhancing hair growth, but it also relieves hangovers as well as brain and liver damage from alcohol. It detoxifies the body from many harmful chemicals, promotes healing, and strengthens the immune system. The amino acid glutamine is also known as “nature’s brain food.” Supplementing with glutamine improves mental capacities, helps speed the healing of ulcers, alleviates fatigue, and the craving for sugar. It also detoxifies ammonia in the brain and is very effective in the treatment of hypoglycemia. Glutamine can be effectively deployed in the treatment of alcoholism and can protect against alcohol poisoning. It has been documented to benefit both schizophrenia and senility as well.^a

a Phyllis A. Balch, *Prescription for Nutritional Healing*, pp. 170–77.

693 Body imbalances underlying most addictions are often caused or sustained by an unhealthy diet. Poor nutritional habits that can promote addictions

include undisciplined diets with excess salt and meat, too many refined or hydrogenated fats, or a surplus of processed foods with chemical additives. The body becomes addicted to a substance that temporarily corrects the imbalances caused by excesses such as these. Sometimes this addictive substance is itself a food. Food allergies are often addictions in disguise.

Dietary adjustments can play a major role in overcoming an addiction. A healthy diet supports the body's elimination of toxins and gives the body the resources it needs to function free of its dependency. During the transition period, a short cleansing juice fast is certainly helpful in speeding the elimination of toxins. If the body has been depleted of nutrients as a result of the addiction, this cleanse should last only three days. A juice fast is better than a straight water fast, because it supplies much-needed nutrients in an easily absorbed form while simultaneously washing toxins away. Carrot, spinach, and beet juice are excellent liver and pancreas re-builders.

A diet that supports the process of weaning the body from its addiction will be rich in alkaline foods, such as fruits and vegetables, and low in acid-forming foods such as meats, milk products, refined flour products, and sugar. Acid-forming foods make cravings and withdrawal more intense. An alkaline diet allows the detoxification process to proceed gradually so that cravings are reduced and withdrawal symptoms are less severe. Drinking sufficient amounts of water is a key element of detoxification. Extra fiber will also help pull toxins from the body. Raw vegetables, whole grains, and flax seeds will provide the fiber needed to bind toxins and keep the bowels moving. A diet complemented with kelp and cereal grass will provide some of the needed nutrients.

Smokers who are quitting often tend to overeat. An alkaline, high-fiber diet is helpful in maintaining normal body weight. Former smokers may find temporary oral substitutes helpful. Vegetable sticks, apples, nuts, popcorn, sunflower seeds, and licorice root are possibilities. Porridge and muesli, which contain oats, help curb the desire for tobacco due to their sedative properties.

694 Stephen P Elliott, Martha Goldstein, Michael Upshall (editors), *Webster's New World Encyclopedia, College Edition*. (New York, New York: Helicon Publishing and Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1993), p. 10.

ergotamine – a crystalline, water-soluble polypeptide, obtained from ergot (the dried sclerotium of *Claviceps purpurea*, a fungus that grows on rye and related plants); it has been used to stimulate uterine contractions during labor and in the treatment of migraine headaches.

695 *Ibid.*, pp. 246, 277.

696 David Crystal (editor), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia, Second Edition*. (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 749, 812.

697 Ibid., p. 209.

698 Malnutrition is often coupled with addiction problems and compounds the symptoms of cravings and withdrawal. Supplements can rectify these imbalances. In addition to the vitamins and minerals mentioned above, green food supplements are excellent in assisting recovery from drug and alcohol addictions. Chlorophyll and alfalfa detoxify the blood and provide numerous essential nutrients, including protein and many minerals. Bee pollen is also used in addictions as a nourishing food, to provide the body with energy and reduce cravings.

699 Dr. Mark H. Beers et al. (editors), *The Merck Manual of Medical Information*, pp. 1559–60..

700 Ibid.

701 Ibid.

702 Ibid.

Caring adults (parents, teachers, doctors, counselors, Islamic scholars) together can assess whether an adolescent has a problem with substance use. Some parents impetuously bring their adolescent into a doctor's office demanding that he perform a urine drug test; however concerned parents who want to reverse the cycle of self-destruction should keep a few points in mind. Firstly, the doctor cannot force an adolescent to take a drug test if the latter refuses. Secondly, the results of a urine test may be falsely negative; factors influencing results are the metabolism of the drug and the time it was last used. Thirdly, and most importantly, in an atmosphere of accusation and confrontation, it will be difficult for the doctor to obtain a history from the adolescent, which is key to making the diagnosis.

703 Dan Smith, Ane Bræin, *The Penguin State of the World Atlas, Seventh Edition*. (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 90–91.

704 Ibid.

705 Ibid.

706 Narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās and recorded by Abū Dāwūd.

كُلُّ مُسْكِرٍ خَمْرٌ وَكُلُّ مُسْكِرٍ حَرَامٌ.

707 Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, Volume 7, p. 52 (to be found in *Tafsīr al-Qurtubī* and the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim).

708 This would include the following beers, ciders, and other fermented drinks: barley wine, bock, dortmunder, kumiss, kvass, mead, metheglin, munchener, perry, pilsener, pombe, porter, and scrumpy; as well as the following cocktails and long drinks: Bacardi, black velvet, Bloody Mary, Bronx, buck’s fizz, caudle, cobbler, daiquiri, eggnog, frappe, gimlet, gin sling, gluhwein, Harvey Wallbanger, highball, kir, Manhattan, margarita, martini, mint julep, negus, old-fashioned orgeat, pina colada, planter’s punch, posset, rickey, sangria, screwdriver, shandy, shrub, sidecar, snowball, stinger, syllabub/sillbub, Tom Collins, wassail, whiskey sour, and white satin. And of course the following hard stuff spirits and liqueurs are *ḥarām*: absinthe, advocaat, amaretto, anisette, applejack, aqua vitae, aquavit, armagnac, arrack/arak, bourbon, calvados, creme de cacao, creme de cassis, creme de menthe, creme de noyau, curacao, fine champagne, fior dell’alpi, galliano, grappa, Hollands/Geneva, kirsch/kirschwasser, kummel, mai tai, maraschino, marc, mastic, mescal, mirabelle, negra, ouzo, pastis, poteau, pousse-café, raki, ratafia, redevye, sake, sambucca, schnapps, slivovitz, steinhager, strega, tequila, Tia Maria, and van der Hum.

709 **astrology** – a system of “knowledge” whereby human nature can be understood in terms of the heavens. Resting on a foundation of ancient philosophy, particularly on the idea that the force patterning the heavens likewise arranges humanity, astrology relies upon precise measurement and a body of symbolism that has come to be associated with each of the signs of the zodiac and the planets (including the Sun and the Moon). As with dogma, it is a source of both trivial superstition and profound insight.



The most significant stages in the development of astrology took place in the first millennium BCE in Mesopotamia and Greece. From there it spread worldwide, developing distinct branches and great variation in method. It blossomed most during those periods representing peaks of cultural achievement — Classical Greece, Renaissance Europe, and Elizabethan England. Today it thrives in several eastern countries, and in the West is undergoing something of a rebirth, though the modern em-

phasis is on self-knowledge rather than on predicting events. Astrology and astronomy parted company due to the influence and input of Islamic sciences, hundreds of years ago.

710 Narrated by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and recorded by Muslim.

إن الذي حرم شربها حرم بيعها.

711 Narrated by Ṭāriq ibn Suwayd al-Ḥaḍramī and recorded by Muslim, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and Abū Dāwūd.

إنه ليس بدواء ولكنه داء.

712 Narrated by Ibn Mas'ūd and recorded by al-Bukhārī and others.

إن الله لم يجعل شفاءكم فيما حرم عليكم.

713 National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency, Inc. (NCADD), *Alcohol, Drugs, and Crime*. (New York, New York: NCADD website, www.ncadd.org, June 27, 2015).

<https://www.ncadd.org/about-addiction/alcohol-drugs-and-crime>

714 Ibid.

715 Ibid.

716 Ibid.

717 Ibid.

718 Ibid.

719 Ibid.

720 Ibid.

721 Ibid.

722 Ibid.

723 Ibid.

724 Ibid.

725 Ibid.

726 Ibid.

727 National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), *Alcohol Alert No. 38, October 1997*. (Bethesda, Maryland, USA: US Department of Health and Human Services and National Institutes of Health, NIAAA website, [www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa38.htm), October 2000).
<http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa38.htm>

728 Kali Holloway, *Forget the war on drugs: Alcohol ruins more lives than all other drugs combined*. (San Francisco, California, USA:Salon.com, October 19, 2015).
http://www.salon.com/2015/10/19/forget_the_war_on_drugs_alcohol_ruins_more_lives_than_all_other_drugs_combined_partner/

729 This information is available from a variety of historical and biographical sources; one reference is given below:

Anonymous author, *Famous Drunks in History*. (Lords of the Drinks website, [www.lordsofthedrinks.com](http://lordsofthedrinks.com), August 12, 2013).
<http://lordsofthedrinks.com/drunks-that-made-world-history/>

730 Brenda Hougen, *Benito Mussolini: Fascist Italian Dictator*. (Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA: Compass Point Books, 2007), pp. 15–17.

Chris N. Trueman, *Adolf Hitler*. (United Kingdom: The History Learning website, www.historylearningsite.co.uk, July 19, 2016).
<http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/world-war-two/political-leaders-of-world-war-two/adolf-hitler/>

731 Dr. E. Michael Jones, *The Jewish Revolutionary Spirit and Its Impact on World History*. (South Bend, Indiana, USA: Fidelity Press, 2008), pp. 571–77.

732 Muḥammad Ḥ. al-Āṣī, *The Ascendant Qur'an, Volume 7*. (Toronto, Canada: The Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought, 2013), pp. 67–73.

733 Jenna Weissman Joselit, *Our Gang: Jewish Crime and the New York Jewish Community, 1900–1940*. (Bloomington, Indiana, USA: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 97–98.

734 As explained by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and Mujāhid.

735 Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, Volume 7, p. 101 (originally narrated by Muqātil ibn Ḥayyān).

736 Narrated by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.
 إن هذا البلد حرام لا يعصده شجره ولا يختلى خلاه ولا ينفر صيده ولا تلتقط لقطته إلا لعرف.

737 Narrated by Umm al-Mu'minīn 'Ā'ishah and recorded in the *sunans* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

738 Narrated by 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim ('Ayr is a mountain in the area of Madinah and Thawr is a mountain in Makkah).
 المدينة حرم ما بين عير إلى ثور.

739 Narrated by 'Abbād ibn Tamīm and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.
 اللهم إن إبراهيم حرم مكة وإني أحرم المدينة مثلما حرم به مكة...

740 If a Muslim is in *ṣalāh* inside the Ka'bah area, he can be in any direction toward it; this is also true at the antipode of Makkah in the southern Pacific Ocean, about 30 miles north of Tematagi, an atoll in the southeastern area of the Tuamotu Archipelago, French Polynesia.

741 Cyril Glassé, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*. (San Francisco, California: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1989), pp. 245–47.

742 Ibid.

743 Ibid.

cubit – ancient measure of length based on the length of the forearm; today 1 cubit is considered to be roughly equivalent to 0.457m.

744 **Abrahaḥ** – Christian king of southern Arabia in the middle of the 6th century CE. In Islamic literature his fame comes from the Yemeni expedition he led against Makkah in the year of the birth of the Prophet (ﷺ) — 53BH. His failed assault is recorded in *Sūrah al-Fil* of the Qur'an. He left a long inscription on the Great Dam of Ma'rib, a city that was once the capital of the ancient Kingdom of Saba'.

745 **‘Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr** (died 73AH) – son of al-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām and Asmā’ bint Abī Bakr. He led a revolt against the usurpation of power by the Umayyad tyranny. After liberating Makkah from Umayyad control in 64AH, he became the *khalīfah* for a short time. The following year in a siege of Makkah, the Ka‘bah was hit by a flaming projectile from a catapult, and burned to the ground. ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr rebuilt it on a larger scale to include Hijr Ismā‘īl; however this structure was eventually pulled down by al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf and rebuilt on the original pattern. When Makkah once again came under Umayyad occupation, ‘Abdullāh’s body was hung from a gibbet and his head sent to Damascus.

‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān (26–86AH) – fifth king of the Umayyad Dynasty (66–86AH), born in Madinah; the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem was built during his administration as a distraction from the Ka‘bah in Makkah. By eliminating the council of advisors, ‘Abd al-Malik concentrated all decision-making power in the office of the king. Though he had been well educated in Madinah and became a seasoned politician and military commander by the time he assumed the kingship, he was capable of incredible cruelty.



During his reign, all important records were translated into Arabic and it was made the state language, and for the first time, a special currency for the Muslim world was minted, which led to war with the Byzantine Empire. ‘Abd al-Malik decisively defeated the Byzantines after the defection of a large contingent of Slavs. The Islamic currency was then made the only currency of exchange in the entire Muslim world (an image of the coin, with the likeness of ‘Abd al-Malik, is shown above). The endemic Umayyad discrimination against non-Arab Muslims, which was initiated by Mu‘āwiyah, was made institutional by ‘Abd al-Malik as important positions of state were reserved for Arabians during and after his administration. In fact, the preferential treatment of Arabians coupled with the problem of non-Arab Muslims grew more and more acute as successive Umayyad kings exacerbated the discrimination, ultimately becoming one of the major factors in the undoing of Umayyad rule. ‘Abd al-Malik initiated many reforms related to agriculture and commerce. He is also credited for organizing the first regular postal service in the Muslim World.

Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafī (40–95AH) – refer to **Endnote 133** in Volume 4.

- 746 **Mi'mār Sīnān** (circa 1489–1588) – the greatest architect of the Ottomans. Born at Kayseri in Anatolia of Christian origin, he became a Janissary and took part in several campaigns, during which he attracted attention by devising ferries and building bridges. From circa 1540, he was exclusively engaged in building *masjids*, palaces, schools, and public baths from Bosnia to Makkah. His three most famous works are the Shehzade Masjid, the Suleymaniyye in Istanbul, and the Masjid of Sultan Selim II in Edirne. The list of his buildings is given by his biographer, the poet Mustafa Sa'ī (died 1595).



- 747 **Murad IV** (1612–1640) – Ottoman sultan (1623–1640). After suppressing an army mutiny in 1632, he captured the Safavid fortress of Eriwan (1635). When Baghdad itself surrendered in 1638, he subsequently entered into a peace treaty with the Safavids (1639). He possessed some literary talent and was interested in literary debate, Ewliya' Celebi being his most famous favorite.



- 748 **Fayṣal ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz Āl Sa'ūd** (1906–1975) – king of Saudi Arabia (1964–1975). In 1958 his elder brother Sa'ūd ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz surrendered power to Fayṣal while remaining king nominally, but in 1964 the latter was proclaimed as such. He opposed Israel and communism, headed the conservative Muslim bloc, and maintained subservient ties with the United States. He was shot and killed by his nephew in circumstances that are still shrouded with uncertainty. Refer also to **Endnote 87** in Volume 2.



- 749 **Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Arabī al-Ḥātīmī al-Ṭā'ī** (560–638AH) – also known al-Shaykh al-Akbar or simply Ibn 'Arabī; one of the greatest, and certainly the most prolific, Sufis of Islam. Born in Murcia, Spain, he impressed his father's friend, Ibn Ruṣhd (Averroes), who was then judge in Seville. He travelled far and wide in the Muslim countries, and in 627AH (1230CE) settled in Damascus where he died and was buried. There seems little doubt that he is the author of some 400 works, among which are a full exposition of his Sufi doctrine, and a summary of the teaching of 28 prophets from Adam to Muḥammad (ﷺ). His ideas had their most profound influence in Anatolia. It has been suggested, more and more so as historical information is uncovered, that his description of the unseen



and the afterlife profoundly influenced the works of Dante Alighieri, the Italian poet of the Late Middle Ages, particularly the latter's *Divine Comedy*.

750 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah and recorded by Muslim.

ذُرُونِي مَا تَرَكْتُكُمْ فَإِنَّمَا هَلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ بِكَثْرَةِ سؤَالِهِمْ وَاخْتِلَافِهِمْ عَلَى أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ مَا نَهَيْتُكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهَوْا
وَمَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِهِ فَأَتُوا مِنْهُ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ.

751 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah and recorded by al-Nisā'i.

”أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! قَدْ فَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ الْحَجَّ فَحُجُّوا“ فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ ”أَكُلْ عَامٍ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ؟“ فَسَكَتَ حَتَّى قَالَهَا ثَلَاثًا. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ”لَوْ قُلْتَ 'نَعَمْ' لَوَجِبْتَ وَلَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ.“ ثُمَّ قَالَ ”ذُرُونِي مَا تَرَكْتُكُمْ فَإِنَّمَا هَلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ بِكَثْرَةِ سؤَالِهِمْ وَاخْتِلَافِهِمْ عَلَى أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ. فَإِذَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ فَأَتُوا مِنْهُ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَإِذَا نَهَيْتُكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ فَدَعُوهُ.“

752 Narrated by 'Āmir ibn Sa'd who heard the hadith from his father, and recorded by Muslim.

إِنَّ أَكْثَرَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فِي الْمُسْلِمِينَ جَرَمًا مِنْ سَأَلَ عَنْ شَيْءٍ لَمْ يَحْرَمَ عَلَى الْمُسْلِمِينَ فَحَرَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَجْلِ مَسْأَلَتِهِ.

753 Narrated by Ḥannād ibn al-Sirrī who heard it from Abū Mu'āwiyah, who heard it from Dāwūd ibn Abī Hind, who got it from Makhūl, who obtained it from Abū Tha'labah al-Khashnī. Another narration of the same was given by 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr and recorded by Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَرَضَ فَرَائِضَ فَلَا تُضَيِّعُوهَا وَحَدَّ حُدُودًا فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا وَنَهَى عَنْ أَشْيَاءَ فَلَا تَنْتَهِكُوهَا . وَسَكَتَ عَنْ أَشْيَاءَ رُخْصَةً لَكُمْ لَيْسَ بَيْنَسِيَانٍ فَلَا تَبَحَثُوا عَنْهَا.

754 Refer to Endnote 752 above.

755 Narrated by Abū al-Dardā' and recorded by Ibn Mājah.

لَقَدْ تَرَكَتُكُمْ عَلَى مِثْلِ الْبَيْضَاءِ لَيْلِهَا وَنَهَارِهَا سِوَاءٍ.

756 Narrated by Abū Sa'id al-Maqbirī and recorded in the collections of al-Bukhārī and Ibn Ḥabbān.

إِنَّ هَذَا الدِّينَ يَسُرُّ وَلَنْ يَشَادَ الدِّينَ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا غَلِبَهُ.

757 Narrated by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and recorded by al-Bukhārī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and al-Ṭabarānī.

أَحَبُّ الدِّينِ إِلَى اللَّهِ الْحَنِيفِيَّةُ السَّمْحَةُ.

758 Narrated by Anas ibn Mālik and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

يسروا ولا تعسروا وبشروا ولا تنفروا.

759 Narrated by Anas ibn Mālik and recorded by Muslim.

أنتم أعلم بأمير دنياكم.

760 Narrated by 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ and recorded by al-Bukhārī.

إذا حكم الحاكم فاجتهد ثم أصاب فله أجران . وإذا حكم فاجتهد ثم أخطأ فله أجرٌ.

761 Narrated by Mu'ādh ibn Jabal and to be found in the majority of the books of hadith.

لَمَّا بَعَثَنِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِلَى الْيَمَنِ قَالَ "كَيْفَ تَقْضِي؟" قُلْتُ "أَقْضِي بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ." قَالَ "فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ؟" قُلْتُ "فَبِسُنَّةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ." قَالَ "فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ فِي سُنَّةِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ؟" قُلْتُ "أَجْتَهِدُ رَأْيِي وَلَا أَلُو." فَضَرَبَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ صَدْرِي وَقَالَ "الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي وَفَّقَ رَسُولَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ لَمَّا يُرْضَى رَسُولَ اللَّهِ."

762 **empiricism** – from the Greek word *empeiria* for *experience* or *experiment*; in philosophy, the belief that all knowledge is ultimately derived from sense experience. It is suspicious of metaphysical schemes based on *a priori* propositions, which are claimed to be true irrespective of experience. It is frequently contrasted with rationalism. Empiricism developed in the 17th and early-18th centuries through the work of John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume, traditionally known as the British empiricist school.

rationalism – in theology, the belief that human reason rather than divine revelation is the correct means of ascertaining truth and regulating behavior. In philosophy, rationalism takes the view that self-evident propositions deduced by reason are the sole basis of all knowledge (disregarding experience of the senses). It is usually contrasted with empiricism. Following the work of the philosophers Descartes and Spinoza, rationalism was developed by Leibniz and Kant, through whom it influenced 19th-century idealism and 20th-century analytic philosophy. Refer also to **Endnote 260** in Volume 10.

763 The premises of a sound induction may give good reason for believing the conclusion — for instance, “*the Sun has always risen in the past, therefore it will rise tomorrow*” — but do not logically entail the conclusion, as they do in a valid deduction. Deduction, in logic, is any inference whose conclusion follows necessarily from its premise(s). The premise need not be true or bear any resemblance to reality; however if the premise is accepted, then the con-

clusion cannot be denied when the logic is sound. Hence, “*Cairo and Karachi are planets; therefore Cairo is a planet*” is a valid (logical) argument; whereas “*Either Cairo or Mars is a planet, therefore Mars is a planet*” is not logical. Inference is a sequence of steps leading from a set of premises to a conclusion. The rules of inference apply to the construction of good and valid arguments. A premise is a leading sentence that is explicitly assumed in an argument: in “*Baghdad is larger than Makkah; therefore, Makkah is smaller than Baghdad,*” “*Baghdad is larger than Makkah*” is the only premise. A sentence need not be true, or even believed to be true, to function as a premise.

The formal, systematic study of the principles of valid inference and correct reasoning is called *logic*. Deductive logic is the study of inferences that are valid (or invalid) in virtue of their structure, not their content. “*If mother then daughter, hence mother therefore daughter*” is valid whatever the values of mother and daughter are; and any inference with that structure is valid. There are two main parts of elemental deductive logic. Propositional logic deals with inferences involving simple sentences in the indicative mood joined by such connectives as *not* (negation), *and* (conjunction), *or* (disjunction), and *if...then* (conditional). Predicate logic (also known as quantification theory) deals with sentences in the indicative mood involving such quantifying terms as *some*, *all*, and *no*. Thus, “*All Muslims are humans, and no humans are animals; therefore no Muslims are animals*” is a (valid) inference in predicate logic. The investigation of deductive inference has also been extended beyond propositional and predicate logic to include: modal logic, which treats the notions of necessity and possibility; epistemic logic, which is the logic of knowledge and belief; many-valued logic, which allows some sentences to be assigned a designation other than true or false; tense logic, which analyzes inferences involving such temporal notions as past, present, and future; and deontic logic which deals with imperatives, practical reasoning, and expression of obligation. Inductive logic is the study of inferences that are not deductively valid, but are such that the premises, if true, would increase the likelihood of the truth of the conclusion, and this leads naturally to probability theory and statistics. Aristotle wrote the first systematic treatise on logic, which remained extremely influential for 2,000 years, until George Boole and others evolved a rigorous mathematical logic in the 19th century.

764 commutative law – in mathematics, either of two laws relating to number operations of addition and multiplication, stated symbolically: $a + b = b + a$ and $ab = ba$. From these laws it follows that any finite sum or product is unaltered by reordering its terms or factors.

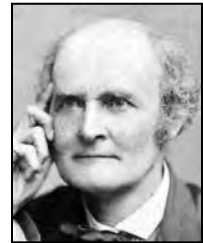
associative law – in mathematics, either of two laws relating to number operations of addition and multiplication, stated symbolically: $a + (b + c) =$

$(a + b) + c$, and $a(bc) = (ab)c$; that is, the terms or factors may be associated in any way desired.

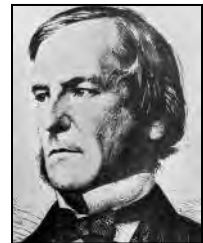
765 **William Rowan Hamilton** (1805–1865) – Irish physicist, astronomer, and mathematician, who made important contributions to classical mechanics, optics, and algebra; born in Dublin and considered to be a prodigy. His studies of mechanical and optical systems led him to discover new mathematical concepts and techniques. His best known contribution to mathematical physics is the reformulation of Newtonian mechanics, now called Hamiltonian mechanics, which is central to the modern study of classical field theories such as electromagnetism, and to the development of quantum mechanics. In pure mathematics, he is best known as the inventor of quaternions (the quotient of two vectors).



Arthur Cayley (1821–1895) – British mathematician, born in Richmond, London. He helped found the modern British school of pure mathematics. While a student at Trinity College, Cambridge, he excelled in Greek, French, German, and Italian, as well as mathematics. Afterward, he worked as a lawyer for 14 years. He is best known for postulating the Cayley-Hamilton theorem: that every square matrix is a root of its own characteristic polynomial, and verified it for matrices of order 2 and 3.



George Boole (1815–1864) – mathematician and logician, born in Lincoln, Lincolnshire. He became professor of mathematics at Cork in 1849. He is primarily known for his *Mathematical Analysis of Logic* (1847) and *Laws of Thought* (1854), where he employed mathematical symbolism to express logical processes (Boolean algebra). A pioneer of modern symbolic logic, he greatly influenced the work of Friedrich Frege and Bertrand Russell, among others.

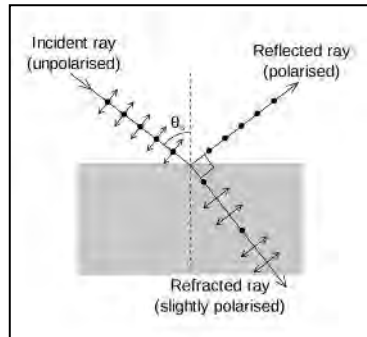


766 **Ḥarrān** – today it is called Altınbasak, and is in Turkey, near Urfa.

Sabaeans – in Arabic, it is rendered al-Ṣābi'ah. The name identifies two quite distinct sects: one is that of the Mandaeans or Subbas, a Judeo-Christian sect practicing the rite of baptism in Mesopotamia, the so-called Christians of John the Baptist (ܩܘܪܝܢܐ); the other is that of the Sabaeans of Ḥarrān, a pagan sect that survived for a considerable time under Islam. The

Sabaeans mentioned in the Qur'an are apparently the Mandaeans. The Sabaeans of Ḥarrān believed in a creator of the world who is reached through the intermediary of astral spirits. They were persecuted by the 'Abbasid ruler al-Qāhir bi-Allāh. After the middle of the 11th century CE, all traces of the Sabaeans of Ḥarrān were lost. Some great scholars belonged to this sect, among them Thābit ibn Qurrah and Sinān ibn Thābit, the physician of the ruler al-Muqtadir (ruled from 908–932CE).

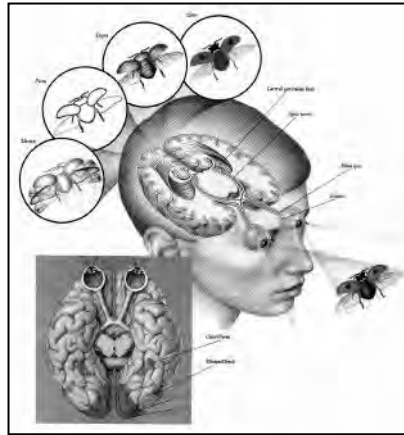
767 **refraction** – the bending of light (it also happens with sound, water, and other waves) as it passes from one transparent substance into another. This bending by refraction makes possible the existence of lenses, magnifying glasses, prisms, and rainbows. The human eye could not function without this bending of light, which could not be adequately focused onto the retina otherwise.



Light refracts whenever it travels at an angle into a substance with a different refractive index (optical density). This change of direction is caused by a change in speed. For example, when light travels from air into water, it slows down, causing it to continue to travel at a different angle or direction. The amount of bending depends on two things: (1) change in speed (if a substance causes the light to speed up or slow down more, it will refract (bend) more); and (2) angle of the incident ray (if the light is entering the substance at a greater angle, the amount of refraction will also be more noticeable, but if the light is entering the new substance from straight on, at 90° to the surface, the light will still slow down, but it will not change direction). If light enters any substance with a higher refractive index (such as from air into glass) it slows down. The light bends toward the normal line (see figure). If light enters into a substance with a lower refractive index (such as from water into air) it speeds up. The light bends away from the normal line. The higher the refractive index, the more light will slow down and the more it will change direction as it enters the substance.

reflection – in physics, the bouncing off from a suitable surface of a beam of light, sound, or other wave at an angle equal to that of the incident beam. Light is reflected by shiny (for example, metal) surfaces, and at a change in refractive index (for example, in passing from air to glass). Sound is reflected by hard, smooth surfaces and in passing through a change in air density. Reflectance is the measured ratio of incident intensity to reflected intensity.

vision – the process by which organisms form an internal representation of the external environment on the basis of the pattern of light available to them. The crucial requirement is for a light-sensitive receptor. Organisms with a higher complexity of development have many such photoreceptors (about 230 million in each eye in humans) making up a photoreceptive surface, the retina. For anything more than crude light detection, an image is essential; this constitutes an orderly representation



on the retina of the spatial array of objects in the environment. Information from the retina passes through the one million fibers of the optic nerve to the occipital cortex, the first of many brain regions devoted to vision. The way in which the brain encodes basic visual features such as color, edges, and movement is becoming increasingly understood, but very little is known of how these features are interpreted to enable us to recognize objects.

lens – a transparent optical element comprising two refracting surfaces, at least one of which is curved; parallel light rays passing through the lens may converge (and focus at a point) or diverge, depending on the lens shape. Lenses are characterized by their focal length (the distance at which the image of a distant object is most sharply defined) and their aperture or f -number (the light transmission). They are widely used in optical instruments, binoculars, projectors, and cameras, and are usually made of glass, sometimes of plastic.

rainbow – an arc of light comprising the spectral colors, formed when the Sun's rays are refracted and internally reflected by raindrops acting as prisms or lenses. It is visible when the Sun is behind the observer and the rain is in front. A double rainbow may occur when some of the light is refracted twice.

mirror – a smooth surface that reflects large amounts of light, usually made of glass with a highly reflective metal deposit on the front or back, or of highly polished metal. Plane mirrors form a virtual image the same size as the object, but with left and right reversed. Convex mirrors distort the image; concave mirrors with a parabolic surface are used in astronomical telescopes to collect and focus light. Large astronomical mirrors can be over 5 m (16 ft) across, but mirrors of all sizes are used in optical instruments. Half-silvered mirrors are used as one-way mirrors between a well-lit and a dimly lit room.

aberrations – in optics, aberrations are deviations in lenses from perfect images, as consequences of the laws of refraction. Chromatic aberrations result from the dependence of the bending power of a lens on wavelength, and may produce images having colored haloes. Color-independent aberrations (monochromatic) deform an image (distortion, field curvature, coma, astigmatism) and blur it (spherical aberration). Aberrations in cameras, binoculars, and other optical instruments can be minimized using lens combinations. Mirrors have similar monochromatic aberrations to lenses, but no chromatic aberrations. In astronomy, the aberration of starlight is the apparent change in the observed position of a star, caused by a combination of the Earth's velocity in orbit around the Sun, and the finite speed of light.

768 Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, Volume 7, p. 149 (originally from *Musnad al-Dāramī*).

769 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zīlāl al-Qurʿān*, Volume 2. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Shurūq, 1405AH), 11th ed., p. 987 (originally from *Musnad al-Dāramī* by way of al-Zuhri).

770 Ibid.

771 Ibid., originally from al-Dāramī through the following sequence of narrators: ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Shibaḥ, Ibn Faḍīl, and ‘Aṭā’.

772 Ibid.

Mālik ibn Anas (93–179AH) – a major Muslim jurist, the imam of the Mālikī school of jurisprudence (*madhhab*), which is named after him. He is frequently called the Imam of Madinah. His great work, *al-Muwattāʾ* (*The Smoothed Path*), is one of the earliest surviving Islamic law books. Mālik introduced the recognition of the unanimous practice of Madinah, which he established as an organized judicial system. He thus developed a theoretical standard for matters that were not settled from the point of view of consensus.

773 Narrated by al-Mughīrah ibn Shuʿbah and recorded by Muslim, later to be quoted in *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَقُوقَ الْأُمّهَاتِ . وَوَأْدَ الْبَنَاتِ . وَمَنْعًا وَهَاتِ . وَكَرِهَ لَكُمْ ثَلَاثًا: قَيْلًا وَقَالَ . وَكثْرَةَ السُّؤَالِ . وَإِضَاعَةَ الْمَالِ .

774 Willam H. Gentz, *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion*, pp. 1059–60.

775 Ibid.

776 Ibid.

777 According to the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible.

778 Willam H. Gentz, *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion*, pp. 1059–60.

779 Ibid.

780 **al-Ṭā'if** – a city in Arabia, approximately 100 km (60 miles) to the southeast of Makkah. On the eve of the Hijrah, this urban center of Banū Thaḳīf was regarded as the second city of western Arabia (Makkah being the first). It had close relations with Yemen. The Prophet (ﷺ) placed it under military restrictions in 8AH to soften it up for eventual liberation, and in the following year, after some negotiations, its inhabitants became Muslims. Members of Banū Thaḳīf later held high positions in the Umayyad Dynasty, and consequently were not favored by the 'Abbasids or those who governed in the name of Shī'ism. Over the centuries the city came under the jurisdiction of the Makkan Sharīfs. It was occupied by the Wahhābīs in 1802, and then in 1813 by the Egyptians. In 1924 it was incorporated into Saudi Arabia.



Tabūk – town on the pilgrim road from Damascus to Madinah. In 9AH the Prophet (ﷺ) located his base of operations there for his military campaign against the northern Byzantine power.

781 Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *Al-Tafsir al-Munir, Volume 7*, p. 92 (to be found in almost all the *ṣaḥīḥ* books of hadith).

قَامَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ . فَحَمِدَ اللَّهَ وَأَثْنَى عَلَيْهِ . ثُمَّ قَالَ "أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ . إِنَّكُمْ تَقْرَأُونَ هَذِهِ آيَةَ (يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ لَا تَضُرُّكُمْ مَنْ ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ إِلَى آخِرِ آيَةِ) وَإِنَّكُمْ تَضَعُونَهَا عَلَى غَيْرِ مَوْضِعِهَا . وَإِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ 'إِنَّ النَّاسَ إِذَا رَأَوْا الْمُنْكَرَ وَلَا يَغْيِرُونَهُ . أَوْشَكَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ . أَنْ يَغْفِرَهُمْ بِعِقَابِهِ.' "

782 Narrated by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās who told it to 'Ikrimah, and recorded by al-Bukhārī, al-Dārquṭnī, Ibn al-Mundhir, and al-Ṭabarī in *Tafsir al-Ṭabarī*.

783 Paul Barry Clarke, *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society*, pp. 569–70.

784 Ibid.

785 Ibid.

786 Ibid.

787 Ibid.

pantheism – the belief that God and the universe are ultimately identical. It may equate the world with God or deny the reality of the world, maintaining that only the divine is real and that sense experience is illusory. It is a characteristic feature of Hinduism and certain schools of Buddhism. Refer also to **Endnote 11** in Volume 4.

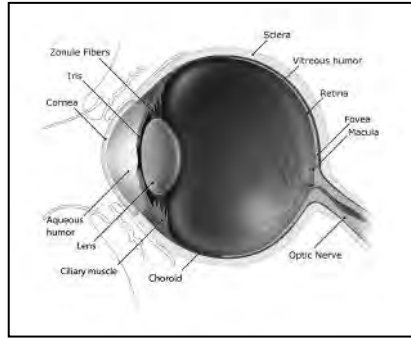
Baruch or Benedictus de Spinoza (1632–1677) – philosopher, born in Amsterdam into a Jewish emigre family from Portugal. His deep interest in optics and the new astronomy, and his radical ideas in theology and philosophy, led to his expulsion from the Jewish community for heresy in 1656. He became the leader of a small philosophical circle and made a living grinding and polishing lenses. His major works were the *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*, published anonymously in 1670 but banned in 1674 for its controversial views on the Bible and Christian theology; and *Ethics, Demonstrated in Geometrical Order*, published posthumously in 1677, a complete, deductive, metaphysical system, intended to be a proof of what is good for human beings derived with mathematical certainty from axioms, theorems, and definitions. He rejected Cartesian dualism in favor of a pantheistic God who has matter and mind as two of his attributes and is the ultimate substance and explanation of the world. He is regarded, along with Descartes and Leibniz, as one of the great rationalist thinkers of the 18th century. Refer also to **Endnote 114** in Volume 4.



788 Paul Barry Clarke, *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society*, pp. 569–70.

789 Loss of vision is a complete or nearly complete absence of sight. A person with loss of vision may see nothing whatsoever or he may be able to distinguish light from dark and possibly even vague shapes. Loss of vision may involve part or all of the visual field of one or both eyes and may be temporary or permanent. Depending on the particular type of vision loss and how rapidly it develops, the person may immediately notice the problem, or it may not be discovered for some time — perhaps not until a car accident or other event prompts a thorough vision examination. Common causes include blockage of the blood supply to the retina, diabetes, optic nerve disease, glaucoma, and, in tropical areas, infections such as trachoma.

retina – the innermost lining of the vertebrate eyeball, which transmits information about the visual world to the brain. It consists of an outer pigmented layer and an inner (cerebral) layer of photosensitive cells (rods and cones) and neurons. The cerebral layer radiates out from the optic disc (the region where the nerve fibers leave the eyeball to the periphery, gradually reducing in thickness. The optic disc is non-pigmented and insensitive to light, because of the absence of both retinal layers, and is known as the blind spot. Within the cerebral layer is the macula (a small oval area in the visual axis) having a central depression (the fovea centralis). The fovea has the highest resolving power of any part of the retina, because it contains only tightly packed cones, which almost reach the internal surface; consequently an image on this region is least distorted. Light focused by the lens forms an inverted image on the retina. This stimulates the rods and cones to generate impulses that are transmitted via the optic nerve to the visual cortex of the brain, where the images are said to be interpreted. The pigmented and cerebral layers occasionally separate (detachment of the retina), leading to partial blindness. Reattachment is often possible using cyroscopy or photo-coagulation by laser beam.



diabetes mellitus – common metabolic disorder in which there is failure of the pancreas to produce insulin in amounts needed to control sugar metabolism. As a result the blood sugar rises above normal values and spills over into the urine, causing large volumes to be produced (polyuria). In some cases the lack of insulin is primary, and results from auto-immune damage to the pancreatic islets. In others, reduced tissue responsiveness, and glucagon, adrenocortical hormones, and some pituitary hormones oppose the action of insulin, and the ensuing diabetes is a secondary consequence. The connection between sweet food and diabetes was known in China by the 1st century CE.

glaucoma – a rise in the pressure of the aqueous fluid within the eye. Acute glaucoma arises when drainage of this fluid is blocked because of infection or cataract rupture. There is sudden pain in the affected eye, variable interference with vision, and blindness may develop. In other patients the onset is insidious; visual loss is slower in its development, and may not be noted until irreversible damage to the retina has occurred. Pressure within the eye can now be measured in most hospitals with a tonometer. Screening for increased pressure is important in the prevention of blindness.

trachoma – infection with a *Chlamydia* bacterium that affects the eyes, leading to conjunctivitis (inflammation of the conjunctiva of the eye) and blindness. Large numbers of people living in the tropics and subtropics are affected.

790 **leprosy** – an ancient chronic infectious disease due to *Mycobacterium leprae* that still affects around 20 million people, mainly in tropical Asia and Africa, Central and South America, but also endemic to the Muslim East and South Europe. It is also known as Hansen’s disease, after Norwegian bacteriologist Armauer Hansen (1841–1912), who discovered the bacillus in 1879. China had hospitals specializing in leprosy treatment from the 11th century CE. The leprosy bacillus shows a predilection for the skin, peripheral nerves, and upper respiratory tract. Onset of the disease is gradual, with the development of an area of numbness in the skin, followed by nodules on the external surfaces of the limbs, and enlarged nerves that are easily felt. The lining of the mouth and nose develops ulcers, and as the infection progresses, deformities of the cartilage and bones begin to occur. Refer also to **Endnote 86** in Volume 4.



791 **Tiberias** – in Arabic, it is called Ṭabariyā, and in Hebrew, it is Tevarya; a holiday resort town in northern Palestine on the West shore of Lake Tiberias, named after Roman Emperor Tiberius. Known since ancient times for its medicinal hot springs, it is one of the four holy cities of the Jews; more recently, a Jewish settlement was established there in 1922.

Herod Antipas (21BCE–39CE) – refer to **Endnote 67** in Volume 4 and **Endnote 592** in Volume 8.

792 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zīlāl al-Qur’ān*, Volume 2, pp. 998–99.

793 **St. Paul the Apostle** (circa 5–67CE) – an “apostle” (according to Christian definition) to the Gentiles. Born a Jew and a Roman citizen at Tarsus (Asia Minor), into a Pharisaic family — hence his Jewish name, Saul of Tarsus — he may have trained as a rabbi. His conversion to Christianity is said to have shaped the remainder of his life, driving him to preach the gospel throughout an extensive part of gentile territory to the north of the Mediterranean until his death, which, according to tradition, was by beheading in Rome during Nero’s persecution (circa 64CE). St. Paul’s letters form a substantial part of the New Testament, showing him to be a vigorous



man and a thinker whose statement of the Christian faith provided a framework for traditional Christian theology. In spite of severe difficulties, described by some as malaria, epilepsy, or glaucoma, St. Paul played an important part in the growth of the early church, and dominated much of its later development. Refer also to **Endnote 611** in Volume 8.

794 Willam H. Gentz, *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion*, pp. 886–87.

795 Ibid.

796 Ibid.

797 Ibid.

798 Ibid.

799 Ibid.

800 Ibid.

6

Sūrah al-An‘ām, Part 1

The Cattle

This *sūrah* was revealed incrementally during the formative 13 years of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) mission in Makkah. Its principal thematic element concentrates on doctrinal belief, which is rooted in the authority and divinity of Allah (ﷻ) but tailored to the receptivity and humanity of man.

Though this initial contact between the *āyāt* of the Qur’an and human society immediately concerned the Arabian human, the nomadic human, or the unrestricted, on-the-loose, boundless human, it was not meant to be restricted to the Arabian society. Rather, it would not only penetrate and change all Arabian societies, but ultimately all societies of the world, in all their longitudes and latitudes, in all their Bedouin and settled varieties, and in all their leisurely and rushed paces.

This doctrinal and thoughtful Qur’an has remained constant since its debut in Makkah over 14 centuries ago mainly because it concerns itself with human nature and human potential, which themselves have not been altered either by a distance of a thousand miles from Makkah, or by a span of a thousand years from

revelation. Man, regardless of whatever era or place he hails from, has to know his relationship with his fellow man, with living beings, with the world, with the universe, and with his own self. Above all he has to know his state of relevance and connectedness to the Creator. This theme does not grow old or irrelevant because it is dealing with the very essence of life, existence, and development.

This Qur'an offered, still offers, and will continue to offer thinking human beings comprehensible answers to their existential questions. Who are we? Where did we come from? How did we come into life? And for what purpose? Who was it that brought man out of a state of non-existence into one of existence? What is it that counts as destiny? And how do we get there? What is there to be encountered upon arrival? The word of Allah (ﷻ) and the Man of Allah (ﷺ) explain what the other dimension — the unseen — means to our souls and to our social selves. Who is it that initiated this existence that is full of puzzles and unknowns? Who is running and controlling this existence? We learn from Allah's (ﷻ) scripture and Sage (ﷺ) who this Creator is and how to interface with Him, and then how to interact with each other and the extended world.

Contextual Overview

In a world void of Qur'anic nutrition, secular social scientists try to provide the "food for thought." One such attempt is existentialism, a philosophical movement closely associated with Soren Kierkegaard, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Martin Heidegger.¹ Usually contrasted with empiricist or rationalist traditions, its most salient theses are that there is no ultimate purpose or order in the world; that the world is vaguely hostile; that persons choose, and cannot avoid choosing, their character and goals, by "self-creating leaps," and have the obligation only to be "authentic"; and that truths about the world and the human situation are revealed most clearly in moments of unfocused psychological anxiety or dread. These themes have greatly influenced European literature, psychoanalysis, and theology in the past century. This is the influence that spilled

through the instruments of colonialism and imperialism into Muslim societies, academia, and the thoughts of “reformers,” who had lost confidence in finding answers to their most fundamental questions in the Qur’an, and hence found themselves delving into theories of existentialism and rationalism.

The designation of rationalism, from the Latin word *ratio* for *reason*, has been applied to a variety of movements in Judeo-Christian philosophy and theology. The notion signifies that reason, rather than experience, tradition, or authority, is the final arbiter in matters of knowledge and truth. Rationalism is often contrasted with empiricism, the latter basing knowledge on experience and observation, while the former on innate ideas of *a priori* categories possessed by the mind. Classical philosophical rationalism is associated with certain European philosophers of the 17th and early-18th centuries, particularly Rene Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, and Gottfried Leibniz.² These thinkers shared the belief that genuine knowledge is derived from what Descartes called the clear and distinct perceptions of the intellect, and that God is the ultimate guarantor of the possibility of such knowledge.

Philosophical rationalism profoundly influenced Protestant theology in the first half of the 18th century, largely through the influence of Christian von Wolff, a follower of Leibniz. Pursuing the model of mathematics, Wolff developed his theological system deductively from a few simple, self-evident truths: the world mirrors God’s perfection, and God’s perfect image is found in human reason; therefore, man’s natural knowledge of God cannot be contradicted by revelation. In Germany the tradition of Wolffian rationalism led directly to the critical rationalism of Immanuel Kant and is reflected in his *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1794).³

The term *rationalism* is often associated with the European Enlightenment and its critique of orthodox Christianity, especially in the emergence of Deism, an intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries that accepted the existence of a creator on the basis of reason but rejected belief in a supernatural deity who interacts with humankind. Nonetheless, the English Deists and the Frenchman Voltaire, in their commitment to the principle of criticism,

were influenced not by Descartes but by John Locke and the empiricist tradition.⁴ They were “rationalists” only in the sense that they appealed to experience and scientific inquiry, rather than to faith and authority, and in their confidence in human nature to increase freedom and human happiness. The rationalists of the 17th century were not characteristically anti-religious; in fact, God is the crux of the systems of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz. On the other hand, the rationalism of the 18th century was often, in figures such as Baron d’Holbach, Claude-Adrien Helvetius, Hermann Reimarus, and Thomas Paine, atheist or at least antagonistic to all forms of religious orthodoxy.⁵ In the 19th century the term *rationalism* was used loosely to signify a general commitment to reason as the ultimate arbiter of truth. Again, it is often used to describe the position of those who attacked Christian theology.

The Qur’anic *āyāt* revealed in Makkah were meant to offer this thinking man the answers that will satisfy both his mind and soul. This happened much before the practical steps that were subsequently taken in Madinah to preserve the psychological and ideological accomplishments that accompanied the Makkan “enlightenment.” In the world of traditional and ritual Islam today, all Muslims and potential Muslims are advised to take a look at the full 13 years of ideological struggle in Makkah, and consider why this much attention was devoted to the ideological, doctrinal, and “philosophical” integrity of the Islamic way, the commitment to Allah (ﷻ), and the independence from other lifestyles and life strategies. During this period, there were no rituals or formal laws to speak of. The fine-tuning of rituals and laws would come at the end of this time period and at the beginning of the relocation of Islamic activity from Makkah to Madinah.

The first break from the materialistic and national-interest worldview was summed up by the article of ideological independence, social self-determination, and doctrinal clarity: *ashhadu an lā ilāha illā Allāh, wa-ashhadu anna Muḥammadan rasūl Allāh* (I testify that there is no authority/deity except Allah and I testify that Muhammad is His Messenger). The content of this statement when properly understood and studied means a paradigm shift from a

world of multiple authorities to a world of One Authority and from a world of multiple deities to a world of One Deity.

Looking at this total religious, social, ideological, and political break from materialism and “social science” through the lens of rationalism, empiricism, existentialism, socialism, and the like, one would begin to entertain serious doubts about whether this is the right way of executing a thorough transformation of society from un-Islamic to Islamic. To the human mind this may appear to be an onerous way of “social transformation.”

The ancient Arabian society around Muhammad (ﷺ) — the first to be transformed — understood what the word *ilāh* (divinity) meant; therefore, they understood what the declaration *lā ilāha illā Allāh* meant. They understood *divinity* to be inclusive of *authority*; in fact, it is the highest authority. They knew that once they acknowledged and affirmed the conviction entailed by this article of ideology and faith, that is, recognizing the authority of Allah (ﷻ), they were delegitimizing all other temporal authorities including tribal, national, racial, corporate, and capital. Once a person agrees with the ideological content of this defining article of commitment, he realizes Allah’s (ﷻ) assurance and His power to exercise authoritative control and dominating influence over man’s conscience, feelings, rituals, social interactions, and regulations.

Allah is the reality of life, the source of prosperity, the guidance through the unknown. Allah is the reference point when it comes to financial transactions, monetary exchanges, commercial activities, and fiscal policies. Allah is the point of reference when people set up their court system, select their judges, execute His laws, and integrate *shari’ah* into their daily and social lives. Allah (ﷻ) is the authority and reference when it comes to spiritual behavior and the maintenance of the divine endowment of body and spirit. Everyone at that time — long before the mental pollution of secularism and materialism came to dominate man’s outlook — knew that *lā ilāha illā Allāh* was a political statement, an ideological manifesto, and a doctrinal gauntlet. It was a rallying cry for political opposition to the status quo. It was a revolution against economic vested interests, military industrial complexes, and political elites

who had stealthily reserved the “authority” part of divinity for themselves while remanding God to His spiritual matters that could not, for all practical purposes, persuasively impact their established ways, historical precedents, or control of people’s lives and institutions. The “slick” deception these elites, business leaders, top executives, and moneylenders have gotten away with, through the rationalizations of their court academics, think-tanks, and legal teams, is their “assigning” God the realm of the spiritual while they basically manage all other aspects of human life.

The Islamic ideological article of commitment to Allah (ﷻ) expressed by *lā ilāha illā Allāh* is an opposition statement and movement against all the power-elites that have extracted and abducted authority from God and given it to themselves. It is a cry against the tyranny of power, the exploitation with money, and the temporal authorities and governments of man when he is on a collision course with God. The Muslims are the ones who need to understand that their verbalization of *lā ilāha illā Allāh* means they are rebels against man-made and man-centered governments — governments that have institutionalized an un-authoritative God through religions that answer to kings and presidents, monarchies and democracies, and are not to be bothered by the authority of Allah (ﷻ). This absent understanding is what the masses of Muslims and the masses of the oppressed people around the world need to revisit. And when this lost meaning is regained, it will empower a revolutionary movement of people who will, by Allah’s (ﷻ) will, topple dictatorships, collapse monarchies, and destroy illegitimate regimes. It is precisely because of this “lost meaning” that the ruling classes of Arabia in those formative days went to war, in every sense of the word, against the Islamic ideological and political opposition to a world void of the kind of impartial justice that can only come from Allah (ﷻ).

Why would an Islamic transformation begin with such an ideological and doctrinal break in this straightforward manner and with a penchant for struggle from its inception? One way of looking at this is to reassemble all the social elements and pieces together. When the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) was sent to his people

with this *dīn* the most fertile areas of that geography were not in Arabian possession. There were other peoples and outside powers who were controlling these fertile lands. All the Levant to the north (present-day Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon) was in the Byzantine orbit; there were some Arabian princes or chieftains who were involved in the local jurisdictions of the Byzantines, but they were simply puppets and proxies. The area of Yemen in the south of Arabia was virtually a Persian satellite, again with some Arabian princes or chieftains who were accountable to their Persian superiors. So virtually the only territories left to Arabian control were the Ḥijāz, Najd, and the surrounding arid desert areas with a few dispersed oases.⁶

To the social scientist’s mind or to the realpolitik mindset, Muhammad (ﷺ) could have capitalized on his social status, as he was publicly known to be the honest and the trustworthy, and as he was the one who had demonstrated the best leadership skills when he, 15 years prior, had successfully arbitrated the placement of the Black Stone at the Ka‘bah. By this reasoning, it would have been possible for him to use his social clout to his advantage, especially as he was descended from the cream of the Qurayshī crop. In these social, political, and even economic circumstances, it would have been apropos to gather the disparate Arabians around a “national interest,” “national security,” or “national priority.” All this could have served to bring these people together at the beginning, instead of dividing them. There were more than enough battles of revenge, tribal tit for tat, and divisions among these Arabians that a “national cause” would have been just the prescription to consolidate them against empires that were taking the best lands while leaving the rest of that forsaken peninsula for the Arabians to tend their sheep and camels. Imagine how much support Muhammad (ﷺ) could have garnered had he called for liberating occupied Arabian territories from the clutches of Byzantine and Persian colonial powers. This was a very opportune time to raise the banner of Arabian unity throughout Arabia and expel the occupiers. Would not that have been better than to begin a divisive movement in Makkah that lasted for 13 bloody years with no substantial results?

Arabian unity was at hand, but Muhammad (ﷺ) had to spoil it — as some nationalists or pragmatists would say!

Some would even go as far as to suggest that Muhammad (ﷺ) lost the opportunity of his life; he could have taken advantage of the political climate to climb the social ladder, galvanize the whole of Arabia under his leadership, and then after consolidating a united front of Arabians, bring the people into the fold of Islam in an aura of glory and triumphalism. It would have been much, much easier had he gone that route than to stir “religious” trouble in Makkah. The fact of the matter is that Allah (ﷻ) did not move His Messenger (ﷺ) in that direction. He told him to go public and to oppose the status quo, the ruling elites, and the whole aristocratic system of Makkah by declaring that there is no authority/deity except Allah (ﷻ) and that he is His Messenger (ﷺ).

But why? Of course, Allah did not want to put an extra burden on His Messenger; however, in the grand scheme of things, all of the “shortcuts” and “easy” ways, though they were abundantly available, would have become painfully inadequate at critical points during the dissemination of this message. This Makkan modus operandi of ideological and political opposition to the well-established tyrannical order was the only way to go. Learning from this, the Muslims should realize they cannot rid themselves of foreign empires and imperialisms such as a “two-superpower” world if they intend to replace that with their own empire or imperialism — even if it is disguised as an Arabian or even “Islamic” one. Tyranny is not permitted to exchange hands. Tyranny is tyranny whether it is hiding inside a synagogue, a church, or a *masjid*. The world is one world and human nature is one human nature, and the only worthy legal and moral authority is the one invested with Allah (ﷻ).

Therefore, the scope of this divine mission and Scripture, the Qur’an, is the whole world and humanity at large, without all the contrived barriers of racism, nationalism, and any other divisive political program or ideological indoctrination. So when a person reiterates the statement *ashhadu an lā ilāha illā Allāh, wa-ashhadu anna Muḥammadan rasūl Allāh*, he is undergoing a mental and spir-

itual rebirth. He no longer belongs to man-made ideologies, materialistic systems, and corporate run societies. Muslims who intone this *shahādah* (testimonial) are on their way to a new world, a new society, and a new tomorrow. In that tomorrow the only authority is Allah's (ﷻ), the only governance is His, and the only legal arrangement is His Shari'ah. In this new world there is no legal prejudice and no moral discrimination against other human beings because they come from another race, a different ethnicity, or "foreign" geography. This is the launch pad and the reference point for the initiation of an Islamic movement.

The Prophet (ﷺ) began his mission at a time when the distribution of wealth was more polarized than ever. Very few people were in control of commerce and finances; accession to monopoly and usury dominated the better part of mercantile transactions. Those who possessed the money and property had the prestige and status that attend wealth. The unabated majority of people, on the other hand, were hungry, deprived, dispossessed and desperate. In the minds of realists and economic theorists, the Prophet (ﷺ) could have launched his movement with the objective of social reform; it could have easily become the first known event of class warfare in history, and for good purpose. There would have been more incentives for success had he advocated an equitable distribution of money in a way that the poor people, in the exercise of their rights, could finally be on par with the generationally rich.

Had Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) done so, most of the oppressed people would have responded to his call for social equity and justice in opposition to financial and economic tyranny. In the eyes of some analysts, this would have been inordinately more practical than to socialize the poor people into uttering an "idealistic" *shahādah* for which there were scarcely any adherents throughout 13 years of torturous opposition in Makkah. Their "logic" would dictate that there would have been a mass movement in support of this class opposition to elitist monopolies. Muhammad (ﷺ) would have become the most popular figure around. The elitist few would have been defeated in a heartbeat. After this had been accomplished, the Prophet (ﷺ) could then have used his popularity and

position to work Islam into society and reform the corrupt system. *Tawhīd* would have had an easier road to success.

But Allah (ﷻ), who knows and has the final word on such a matter, did not will it to be prosecuted in that manner. Allah knows that enduring social justice can only come from a visceral conviction that belongs to an all-encompassing worldview in which He is the only and ultimate authority. It is Allah (ﷻ) who will offer the most strategic way toward a durable social justice, not one that comes from reacting to circumstances and taking things into human hands. When people possess or repossess their inalienable rights, they do so with a conviction that all of their effort was for Allah (ﷻ), because all of them are His subjects and they obey Him in His sweeping and overarching wisdom. In the world order of Islam with Allah (ﷻ) as authority, everyone is located on a continuum that takes them to the final destiny. In this rearrangement of ideas and expectations, the element of greed begins to shrink away, and envy will not find an easy access into public sentiment. And this will be the milieu for a society that does not have to be controlled by the whip or run with the aid of firearms. The state need not be a leviathan or Orwell's Big Brother.⁷ The world is not a legal prison, nor is it moral utopia. All of these symptoms are endemic to a social pathology in which Allah (ﷻ) is no longer the authority, only a deity to be remembered one day a week.

When Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) came to Arabia, its society was in a moral free fall. There may have been some virtues here and there, but the overall moral character was a kettle of fish. No one was interested in the rights of disenfranchised people. Drinking alcohol and getting intoxicated was very normal. Bad habits proliferated. Prostitution was rife. Umm al Mu'minīn 'Ā'ishah gave it the following description,

Intercourse in pre-Islamic times of *jāhiliyah* was one of four [types]. There was the *nikāḥ* [intercourse of marriage], which is what people honor today: a man proposed by asking for the hand of a bride [via father, brother, immediate family]; he gave the dower and then got married.

Another form of intercourse was when a man would implore his wife after she had cleared her monthly period to go to such-and-such man and become pregnant by him. The husband would stay in sexual isolation of his wife until he was sure she had become pregnant from that particular man, [at which time] he could choose to have intercourse with her. This was done in the hope of improving the status of the newborn [or to raise the genetic standard]. This was called *nikāḥ al-istibḍā'*.

Another [kind of] intercourse involved several men (less than ten) who would copulate with a woman, each one having sexual intercourse with her. Nights after becoming pregnant and delivering the baby she would ask them to come to her. None of them could refuse to do so. Once there, she would say to them, "You know what this is all about, you know what was done [nine months ago]. Now I have given birth. He is your son..." and she would point to one of the men present. Then she would give the baby the surname [family name] of that particular man, and that man would have no recourse.

The fourth [type of] intercourse is when many individuals would have access to a woman, and she would not refuse them their desire. These were the prostitutes. They had their lodges distinguished by a long strip of cloth that would tell the public of their availability. This was something like a [primitive] brothel. If one of them became pregnant there was a social code that would offer the baby a minimal amount of support, and society would allocate the baby a family.⁸

Had the Prophet (ﷺ) pursued a moral course and adjusted society through a moral program, he could have acquired numerous accolades for his work. Many people would have been eager and willing to help in this social transformation from immorality to morality. And so there are those people who say that the Prophet (ﷺ) should have launched a moral campaign, won over popular opinion, estab-

lished himself as a moral leader, and from here on he would have been better positioned to introduce and implement Islam, instead of pursuing the ideological and doctrinal polarization that ripped Makkah apart during those 13 years of alienation and persecution.

The fact of the matter is that Allah (ﷻ) did not advise His Prophet (ﷺ) to take this route either. He knew that morals cannot be enforced when they have no point of reference, when they do not belong to a larger program, and when they are a reaction to conditions and circumstances. Morals themselves may wither away if they are not anchored in the larger scope of ideology and doctrinal belief that sets two ways of life apart. When people break from the structure that breeds immorality and strive for one that promotes morality, they do this with a measure of confidence that comes from the only authority on morality — Allah (ﷻ). So *lā ilāha illā Allāh* also means that the moral authority and the authoritative morality is the one that comes from Allah (ﷻ) in the manner that it is communicated and in the manner that it is implemented. Islam is not a knee-jerk reaction to immorality, as repugnant as it may be.

When people commit to the authority and divinity of Allah (ﷻ) they simultaneously rebel against the authority and divinity of counterfeit governments and false gods, be they Roman, Persian, and Arabian, or American, Russian, and Israeli. When authority and divinity are Allah's (ﷻ) in human life then a developing unity of people will come forth, an ongoing diminution of *ṭāghūt* (concentrated power and aggressive force) will take place, and a growing moral social order will take shape — all of this simultaneously and proportionately. This will bring into the world the long-absent element of justice, which no one wants to talk about, much less dwell on. When Islam rises in the conscience it has to rise in the community. When Islam flows in its moral channel it will undoubtedly flow in its legal canal. What is the motivational factor here? It is Allah (ﷻ). It is His proximity, His promise, and His paradise. Nothing materialistic and nothing worldly.

This is not to say that in committing to Allah (ﷻ) as the ultimate authority and in resolving to build His society on earth in

the way He advises, everything will be peaches and cream, a bed of roses. Yes, there will be trying times. There will be sacrifices. There will be some who will give up half way through the course, and others who will continue until the end. This is all part and parcel of this human nature and human potential addressed by the opening chapters of Makkah and the Makkan chapters of the Qur'an.

God's Authority Entails Rejection of Other Powers

The Makkan development of the Islamic personality was one that did not compromise on the practical meaning of Allah's (ﷻ) authority and His oversight of man's pursuit therein. In reliving how this *dīn* came to be, the Muslims need to understand that the foremost emphasis can be none other than the authority of Allah (ﷻ), and only then will they be in a position to implement His social laws and worldwide jurisprudence. And hence, the contemporary Islamic transition from a Makkah of painstaking certitude and thoroughgoing conviction to a Madinah of an established government and the sacrifices of an armed struggle may take years and years. The maturation of the prototypical Islamic momentum, which took place in Makkah, demonstrates that when the committed Muslims have proven they are worthy of it through perseverance, patience in adversity, and standing for their own principles of divine origin, then and only then will they deserve a state away from *jāhiliyah*.

Though this fact may be intentionally obscured by today's rampant secularism (God denial), Islam is not a creed that endorses the separation of God from governance, of Allah (ﷻ) from authority. The pronouncement of the *shahādah* confirms that Allah (ﷻ) is man's divine authority — the only authority in his life. Every detail of man's organized life is based on this fact. The purview of Allah's (ﷻ) authority is not limited to man's tangible and sentient universe; rather it is inclusive of the everlasting afterlife as well as the unknown dimension (*ghayb*) that is beyond the capability of human perception here on earth. The laws of Allah (ﷻ) are not rangebound to man's physical and social world; more than that, they extend into man's conscience, his internal thoughts, as well as his intentions. Thus, Allah's (ﷻ) authority is horizontally and vertically exhaustive, inclusive, and sufficient. No other man-made governmental system captures the depth and the breadth of this godly system.

It will take an unfathomable depth of conviction, a rock-solid commitment, and a determined effort in the face of incessant chal-

lence to reestablish Islam at its systemic level of operation. This is what *īmān* is supposed to be, as opposed to the prevalent reductionist notion of satisfying Allah (ﷻ) with a shallow personal piety full of ritual punctiliousness while maintaining obedience to a recalcitrant public authority bent on denying His power presence in man's affairs. In that founding generation of Muslims around the Prophet (ﷺ), today's Muslims have a practical precedent. Those "diehard" Muslims, due to their unflinching loyalty, were always ready to do what they were told by Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). And so when the time came, after a supervised and incremental process, to "kick the habit" of intoxicants and addictive substances, they did so without hesitation and without a police state to enforce compliance, à la the *muṭṭawi'ūn* of today's Arabia. When the time came to annul all usurious transactions they did so forthwith and without regrets or compromises. And when the time came to purge society of gambling and other such vices they did so immediately with no questions asked. Nowadays, however, there is a proliferation of these social maladies and the accruing individual problems, yet commercial interests, even though they are invested with abundant human and financial resources, not to mention the support of their governments, cannot come close to achieving what that generation of devout Muslims did. No government in society has any real value if it is not rooted in the conscience of man and formulated by the will of man, so as not to conflict with the well-being of man.

Islam is the only *dīn* that pertains to man's real condition, as it is only Allah (ﷻ) who is aware of what this means in its totality. All man-conceived systems are teeming with abstractions and hypotheticals. Islam is not a theory, and the Qur'an is not a hypothesis. Reality is central to this *dīn*. And to deal with reality, an Islamic society is necessary. This Islamic society is founded upon the absolute and uncompromising conviction in the sole and undiminished authority of Allah. It follows that such a society recognizes and accepts the exercise of temporal political power based on the authority of Allah. And in this context, legitimacy is designated to those rulers who accept the authority of Allah (ﷻ) in the way they exercise power through the divinely sanctioned mechanisms of

shūrā and *bay'ah*, and with the *taqwā* that recognizes any abuse of temporal power — that is, a departure from evenhandedness and impartiality — will be countermanded by His consummate power. Elections, as a means of ascertaining the will of the governed, thus are pivotal to the process of allocating executive positions to qualified Muslims. This is the kind of Islamic society that is guided by an Islamic leadership. And both are essential to the makings of a fully operational Islamic *dīn*.

During the Makkan era, Muslims had no power, at least in the material sense; in some cases they were not even in control of their own lives. These early Muslims had neither the autonomy nor the liberty to govern themselves according to Allah's (ﷻ) standards and in fulfillment of His will. As such, they did not qualify for the laws of society to be revealed to them from on high. This changed, though, in Madinah, where the committed Muslims became more self-reliant and were thereby able to rule themselves in their own state. When they demonstrated this capacity, they became eligible for the revealed laws that would organize and regulate their communal, economic, spiritual, military, and political life.

Closely related to this is the fact that Allah (ﷻ) did not preemptively reveal to the Makkan Muslims laws and canons so as to equip them for an eventuality that had not yet occurred, for the time when they would eventually become masters of their own destiny in their own Islamic state in Madinah. Both practical and realistic, Islam was not theorizing problems and then theorizing their solutions. It was, in fact and in practice, a step-by-step manual for a forward-moving *dīn*.

Today, there are intellectuals and theoreticians who will ask or demand to know an Islamic solution to a particular issue or problem, even though there is no Islamic society, in the full sense of the word, to begin with. The type of society that demands the authority of Allah (ﷻ) and revokes all other authorities is the prerequisite for Islamic answers and solutions.

Confusion apparently overwhelms the minds of mainstream Islamic activists or members of the global Islamic movement. Some of them want to solicit “Islamic” answers to the problems of non-

Islamic societies. Others expect Islam to pick up where capitalism and socialism have failed. Yet more regard Islam to be just another ideology that can somehow substitute for myriad failing or failed ideologies. The larger number of them may be entirely sincere; however their ignorance of how this *dīn* gained its first foothold has led them to take the Prophet's (ﷺ) Sirah out of context. And so, parallel to the fraying of capitalist and anti-capitalist social and governmental structures, there has emerged a modern crop of Muslim individuals who want to rush in with an instantaneous Islamic solution thinking they are doing the right thing. Such "spur of the moment" Muslims should take a time-out and remind themselves of the experience of their Prophet (ﷺ). They should realize that there are no shortcuts, that the groundwork necessary for an Islamic revival cannot be simply passed over. This *dīn* only works the way Allah (ﷻ) wants it to work, and not in a way to palliate the inadequacies of those Muslim "activists" who want Islam to fill in some gaps or to stand in for flunking man-made systems and governments. This *dīn* began as a firm and steady loyalty to Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ), and with a heavy dose of perseverance and resolve, it became the conscience of its first community. People in this Islamic society understood that there can be no legitimate authority beside Allah's (ﷻ), and thus any law contrived by man is illegitimate. When this foundation was laid, an Islamic order, an Islamic arrangement, an Islamic organization, an Islamic structure, and then an Islamic governance and rule emerged.

The majority of Muslims in the world today are only wearing a veneer of Islam, and to complicate matters, they are absentminded about this fact. They have to be reminded, or perhaps re-educated, about this issue. They have to realize that when they say the *shahādah*, they are affirming and reaffirming the exclusive and undivided authority of Allah (ﷻ) while negating and nullifying all other secular and godless authorities. This fact has to be established in the Islamic psychology, the Islamic collective mind, and Islamic public opinion. The secularized corruption of *lā ilāha illā Allāh* should by now have seen better days in the past. It took 13 long and arduous years in Makkah to express, explain, and extrapolate this

integral part of divinity — that is, Allah’s (ﷻ) authority. It may or may not be easier nowadays to explain this to “Muslims” who are unaware of this integral meaning. Only the sincere efforts of committed Muslims will prove which is the case.

Some Muslims want to present Islam as a legal alternative to the legal systems that are collapsing here and there in the world. They think they can seize the moment and do humanity a favor. Those employing such an approach are doomed to failure because they skip over the necessary formative stages of this *dīn*. They try to ride a particular wave to reach their admirable aim. They do not take any time to think that the Prophet (ﷺ) did not ride a moral wave, a nationalist wave, or a class wave as a means to implement Islam. These Muslims have to be convinced about Allah’s (ﷻ) authority — the fact that only Allah (ﷻ) is the lawmaker and law-giver — so that they do not make the mistake of trying to fit His laws and regulations upon morally bankrupt societies, and in the process, lose their confidence in Him altogether. Forward-thinking Muslims have to first be convinced of Allah’s (ﷻ) authority and its superiority over temporal rivals, and of the illegitimacy of other value systems and the laws they breed, so that they do not waste their time persuading people about how Islamic laws are better than secular ones.

Another point that should have its effect upon the decision makers of the Islamic movement is that this *dīn* was not meant to compete with other ideologies, philosophies, or religions. In no part of formative Islamic history during the years of the Prophet (ﷺ) and revelation did an Islamic theology, an Islamic philosophy, or even an Islamic ideology require studying time that was somehow divorced of its immediate implementation. Islam grew in “spurts” starting from its defensive posture in Makkah and culminating in its offensive positions in Madinah. Both defensive and offensive positions were intertwined, meaning that there may not have been offensive planning by Muslims in Madinah had there not been offensive planning before that by *mushriks* in Makkah.

This forward-looking Islamic reality in Makkah did not have the leisure or luxury of receiving a Makkan Qur’an consisting of 13

years of revelation all at once, to be studied carefully and then later implemented on a human timeline with human forethought accompanied by human lack of will. These 13 acceleratory years, progressing one *āyah* at a time, prepared the budding Muslims with not only the mental meanings of this Qur'an, but more importantly a conscience that could only be reborn through an unavoidable struggle against the prevalently imperious power culture. In this innovative Makkan period, it was the Islamic conscience that was taking shape, the Islamic community that was crystallizing, and the Islamic common-belief that was evolving. Allah (ﷻ) knows that an Islamic public mind, an Islamic public opinion, and an Islamic public solidarity cannot emerge over night. The gradual buildup of an independent Islamic entity in Makkah consistent with the growing maturity of its *imān-bound* Muslims needed time. Those who are invested with the foresight and enthusiasm to foster the emergence of a modern Islamic society should not be overcome by the immediate ambition that a solid base of committed Muslims can be built in a matter of days or months. The process will take years, definitely, if not longer, as the formative Makkan experience ought to make clear.

Moreover, it does not befit the Islamic character to try to compete with the now widespread anthropocentric philosophies and ideologies, on the left or the right, by presenting a theoretical Islam that is able to eclipse their philosophical or ideological bases in academic forums. An Islamic theory, as superior as it may sound, is not going to replace other theories through publications, media exposure, and discussions. An Islamic political, ideological, or philosophical theory is no substitute for Islamic movement, Islamic struggle, and Islamic sacrifices. An Islamic struggle for the supremacy of Allah's (ﷻ) authority begins when others object to it; it begins when the endemic culture it finds itself in denies it; it begins when that culture's traditions and customs reject it. When the up-and-coming Muslim transformation begins to struggle against its historical self, against its cultural self, against its profit-loving self, and against its national and racial self, then it will gain ground, make progress, and eventually move onto the higher accomplishment of

Islamic self-determination under the authority of Allah (ﷻ). Theories that are superimposed on reality are dangerous and erroneous, but theories that are extracted from reality are helpful and necessary. The Makkan Islamic experience proves that an incubation period of forbearance, perseverance, and tenacity undergirds the fortitude needed to handle the ensuing period of independence, self-governance, and the actualization of Allah's (ﷻ) full authority,

A Qur'anic discourse that We have gradually unfolded, so that you might read it out to mankind by stages, seeing that We have bestowed it from on high step by step, as [one] revelation (17:106).

Islam is not Machiavellian in effecting change so as to only influence outcomes and ends; in fact, the means employed must also conform to the moral Muhammadi methodology. Muslim quick-fixers in the realpolitik arena think they can bring about an Islamic change by ignoring the system of methods followed by Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) in doing the exact same thing. They fail to realize that the pending Islamic social change is contingent upon the Islamic psychological change in progress. Both are interrelated and inseparable. Some of these "Islamists" see no problem in subjecting Islam to "academic rigor" or to the abstract, collegial, and bookish approach that is rigorously applied to other "-isms." This is evidence that these types have gone so far into the *jāhiliyah* of discourse that their minds cannot be assuaged unless they drag the "Islamic process" into it.

Many Muslims who have gone to school in secular societies are fascinated by the scientific progress these societies have achieved. And indeed there is much to be said about that. However, this progress has been strictly physical and material. Therefore, if there is something to be admired in these secular societies, particularly Western ones, it is their technology and applied sciences — but definitely not their behavioral or social sciences. This is where secular ideologies are deficient and leave much to be desired. And it is precisely here that the Muslims have a lot to offer.

One topic that comes to mind in this regard is that of “nation-building” (if this secular term may be borrowed for argument’s sake) and the way it was done by Rasūl-Allāh (ﷺ) and the responsible Muslims of achievement around him. Reconsidering this in the way it deserves, the sincere brothers and sisters in today’s Islamic movement need to realize that no amount of theoretical discourse, as elaborate and as distinguished as it may be, will ever move Islam forward in reality and in practice.

Nation-building in non-Islamic societies may take the form of coup d’états, revolutions, “elections,” or even something akin to the “Arab Spring.” In contrast, however, the building of an Islamic society takes the form of an Islamic commitment to Allah (ﷻ) that is concentrated in the individual to the degree of confidence and determination, in society to the degree of leadership and solidarity, and in the larger geographical context to the degree of civil engagement on the basis of peace and mutual respect that honors His authority above any other. This will eventually lead to a popular Islamic movement, the empowerment of Muslim masses, and the governance of Muslims through an institutional *shūrā*. And when this happens it will not be on the terms of temporal power structures or their essentialist view of Judeo-Christian cum Euro-imperialist history. Rather, it will be Islamic from emotions to ideas to institutions — Islamic first, Islamic throughout, and Islamic last.

Darkness (Ignorance) Comes Before Light (Enlightenment)

In the arrangement of *sūrah*s in the Qur’an, *Sūrah al-An‘ām* is the second Makkan *sūrah*, with *al-Fātiḥah* being the first. *Sūrah*s *al-Baqarah*, *Āl ‘Imrān*, *al-Nisā’*, and *al-Mā’idah* were all revealed in Madinah, for the most part. After them come the two Makkan *sūrah*s, *al-An‘ām* and *al-A‘rāf*, which are followed by *al-Anfāl* and *al-Tawbah*, the two Madinan *sūrah*s that begin the second quarter of the Qur’an. The rest of the first half of the Qur’an consists of Makkan *sūrah*s. The third quarter contains primarily Makkan *sūrah*s with the exception of *Sūrah al-Nūr*; there is some disagreement about whether *Sūrah al-Ḥajj* was revealed entirely in Makkah or

Madinah, but more than likely, portions of it were probably revealed in Makkah and other portions in Madinah. The fourth quarter of the Qur'an is a mix of *sūrah*s revealed in Makkah and Madinah.

Generally speaking, the longest *sūrah*s come at the beginning, the intermediate in length follow, and then the shortest *sūrah*s fall at the end of the Qur'an. The longest *sūrah*s, which begin with *al-Baqarah* and end with *al-Tawbah*, precede a category called the *mi'ūn sūrah*s, that is, those *sūrah*s having in the vicinity of 100 *āyāt*, consisting of the range from *Yūnus* to *al-'Ankabūt*. The *mi'ūn* are followed by the *mathānī sūrah*s, those that have less than 100 *āyāt*. It is said that these *sūrah*s are called *mathānī* (reiterative) because the Muslims have been known to repetitively go through their *āyāt*. *Al-Mathānī* is also another name for *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*, as it is recited multiple times during the daily *ṣalāḥ*s. The *mufaṣṣal sūrah*s, with relatively few or very short *āyāt*, are the ones that follow in quick succession.

Sūrah al-Baqarah is the most comprehensive *sūrah* in the Qur'an. In it there is information about the fundamentals of Islam and its practical foundations as well as derivative matters of commitment. Interspersed in the discourse on *tawḥīd*, resurrection, and the prophetic mission in its general and particular aspects, there are facts pertaining to creation and genesis together with profiles of the people of previous scripture, the *mushriks*, and the *munāfiqs*. Even though these divine categorizations of people share the common feature of rejecting Allah's (ﷻ) authority in one form or another, the Qur'an illustrates their idiosyncratic tendencies through dialogue, discussion, and dispute. This approach is useful because it provides the committed Muslims a reference point for their engagement with such types. The *sūrah* goes on to provide clarifications and instructions pertaining to financial transactions, fighting, and women's issues.

The long *sūrah*s that follow *Sūrah al-Baqarah* appear to complement it. The first three of these provide more detail about the people of previous scripture. Just as *al-Baqarah* spent much time in challenging the Yahūd in particular, *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān* similarly exhausted much of its first half with the Christians. Many *āyāt* of

Sūrah al-Nisā’, especially the later ones, also took issue with them. The character of the *munāfiqs*, which was to some extent encountered in *al-Baqarah*, is further dissected in *al-Nisā’*. Along the same direction, *Sūrah al-Mā’idah* winds down with the common features of the people of previous scripture as well as with some of what they themselves disagree on.

And this leads into *Sūrah al-An‘ām*, which elucidates the doctrinal aspects of scripture in full detail so as to set the record straight concerning those who have deviated on the all-important matter of the relationship between divinity and humanity. This *sūrah* rounds out the doctrinal details pertaining to divinity and *tawhīd*, justice, prophethood, and resurrection that first appeared in *al-Baqarah*. It has its unconstrained character, which can be ascertained by those who are familiar with the language of the Qur’an. Expanding on the doctrinal areas, it covers a broad range from the divine, to the commitment to Him, to visuals of previous civilizations, to affairs of this world and the reality of the coming life, to the development of life itself, and to natural phenomena.

In similar fashion, the ensuing *sūrahs* of *al-Anfāl* and *al-Tawbah*, which conclude the first third of the Qur’an, will wrap up the details related to the *munāfiqs* and warfare, some of which were encountered in *Sūrah al-Nisā’*. The next *sūrah*, *al-A‘rāf*, continues on with issues of doctrine, belief, and commitment to Allah (ﷻ), but through the medium of prophetic history. While *Sūrah al-An‘ām* places due emphasis on Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), who has his stature among the Arabs and among people of scripture in both a genealogical and doctrinal way, *Sūrah al-A‘rāf* places more emphasis on Moses (ﷺ), to whom people of scripture are related through their application of the mosaic law, to some extent or another, that came down through other prophets up to Prophet ‘Īsā (ﷺ).

Sūrah al-Mā’idah ended with the subject of the *mā’idah* (or banquet), which was a counter-reply to the people of scripture. However, *Sūrah al-An‘ām*, in almost its entirety, is a rebuttal to the *mushriks*. One reciprocal aspect between the two *sūrahs* is that while dietary regulations in the latter are mentioned in general, they are mentioned in detail in the former; and this makes sense because *al-*

Mā'idah was revealed toward the end of the 23-year Muhammadi mission. *Al-An'ām* speaks about the *mushriks'* food consumption while *al-Mā'idah* considers that of the people of scripture.

Sūrah al-An'ām places a person in the Qur'anic climate. This is not strictly a mental climate as much as it is a motivation to live the circumstances, the apparent motion, the endurance, the conflict, and all the details that characterize the standoff against the ungodly direction of a materialist world gone wild as it careens toward its apocalyptic demise. Taking this into his behavioral disposition is what puts the listening Muslim at the front line in this conflict between the authority and divinity of Allah (ﷻ) on one side and the authority and divinity of His pretentious temporal rivals on the other.

There seems to be a broad agreement among Islamic scholars that *Sūrah al-An'ām* was revealed all at once, with only a few *āyāt* being excepted. The name of this 6th *sūrah* in the Qur'an comes from the usage of the word *an'ām* (cattle) as follows,

And they say, "Such-and-such cattle and fruits of the field are sacred; none may eat thereof save those whom we will [to do so]..." (6:138);

And they say, "All that is in the wombs of such-and-such cattle is reserved for our males and forbidden to our women..." (6:139).

Ibn 'Abbās said, "*Sūrah al-An'ām* was revealed all at once [on] one night in Makkah and with it came seventy-thousand angels loudly praising Allah."⁹ Ibn 'Umar says that he heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say, "*Sūrah al-An'ām* was revealed to me in one mass with seventy-thousand angels celebrating Allah by praising and thanking Him."¹⁰

- (6:1) All praise is due to Allah, who has created the heavens and the earth, and brought into being deep darkness as well as light: and yet, those who are bent on denying the truth regard other powers as their Sustainer's equals!

- (6:2) He it is who has created you out of clay, and then has decreed a term [for you] — a term known [only] to Him. And yet you doubt —
- (6:3) Although He is Allah in the heavens and on earth, knowing all that you keep secret as well as all that you do openly, and knowing what you gain.
- (6:4) Yet whenever any of their Sustainer's illustrations comes to them, they [who are bent on denying His power presence] turn their backs upon it:
- (6:5) And so they give the lie to this truth now that it has come to them. In time, however, they will come to understand what it was that they were wont to deride.
- (6:6) Do they not see how many a generation We have destroyed before their time — [people] whom We had given a [bountiful] place on earth, the life of which We never gave to you, and upon whom We showered heavenly blessings abundant, and at whose feet We made running waters flow? And yet We destroyed them for their sins, and gave rise to another generation in their stead.
- (6:7) But even if We had sent down unto you [O Prophet] a writing on paper, and they had touched it with their own hands, those who are bent on denying Allah's power would indeed have said, "This is clearly nothing but a deception!"
- (6:8) They are saying, too, "Why has not an angel [visibly] been sent down unto him?" But had We sent down an angel, all would indeed have been decided, and they would have been allowed no further respite [for repentance].
- (6:9) And [even] if We had appointed an angel as Our message-bearer, We would certainly have made him [appear as] a man — and thus We would only have confused them in the same way as they are now confusing themselves.
- (6:10) And, indeed, [even] before your time [O Prophet] have apostles been derided, but those who scoffed at them were [in the end] overwhelmed by the very thing they were wont to deride.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ الظُّلُمَاتِ وَالنُّورَ ۚ ثُمَّ
 الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿١﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ
 قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهُ ۚ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ تَمْتَرُونَ ﴿٢﴾ وَهُوَ اللَّهُ فِي
 السَّمَوَاتِ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّكُمْ وَجَهْرَكُمْ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٣﴾
 وَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٤﴾ فَقَدْ
 كَذَّبُوا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ ۚ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِيهِمْ أَنْبَتُهُمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٥﴾
 أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ مَكَّنَّهِمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَا لَمْ نُمَكِّنْ
 لَهُمْ وَأَرْسَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِدْرَارًا وَجَعَلْنَا الْأَنْهَارَ تَجْرَىٰ مِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ
 فَاهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ ﴿٦﴾ وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ
 كِتَابًا فِي قِرطَابٍ فَلَمَسُوهُ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ لَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ
 ﴿٧﴾ وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ ۖ وَلَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا مَلَكَ لَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا
 يُنظَرُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ مَلَكَ لَجَعَلْنَاهُ رَجُلًا وَلَلَبَسْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ
 مَا يَلْبِسُونَ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ أَسْنَهَيْتُ بِرُسُلٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ
 سَخِرُوا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ
 ثُمَّ أَنْظِرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكذِّبِينَ ﴿١١﴾

- (6:11) Say, “Go all over the earth, and behold what happened in the end to those who gave the lie to the truth!” (al-An‘ām: 1–11).

This *sūrah* reiterates the fact that Allah’s (ﷻ) *dīn* is one from Adam to Muhammad (ﷺ); that people can enjoy free will but are subject to Allah’s natural and social laws; that divine justice may permit variances among individuals and societies; that Allah (ﷻ) is the only source of values and laws, what is right and what is wrong, what is permissible and what is not; and that people should learn from experiences of past cultures, societies, and civilizations,

All praise is due to Allah, who has created the heavens and the earth, and brought into being deep darkness as well as light: and yet, those who are bent on denying the truth regard other powers as their Sustainer’s equals! He it is who has created you out of clay, and then has decreed a term [for you] — a term known [only] to Him. And yet you doubt — although He is Allah in the heavens and on earth, knowing all that you keep secret as well as all that you do openly, and knowing what you gain (6:1–3).

The Qur’an itself was set in motion with the first words of the first *sūrah* (*al-Fātiḥah*), which are “**Al-ḥamdu lillāh: All praise is owed to Allah.**” Four other Makkan *sūrahs* begin with the same words, sharing the common theme of laying out the foundations of Islam, issuing an invitation to it, and building an argument against the *mushriks*. After *al-Fātiḥah*, the first of these is *Sūrah al-An‘ām*, the concluding chapter of the first quarter of the Qur’an. The second is *Sūrah al-Kahf*, the opening chapter of the Qur’an’s third quarter. And finally, the third and the fourth respectively are *Sūrahs Saba’* and *Fāṭir*, which constitute the end of the third quarter.

The words *al-ḥamdu lillāh* in the first sentence of *Sūrah al-An‘ām* are correlated with the creation of the heavens and earth and the rationing of darkness and light. In *Sūrah al-Kahf* the same

words are coupled with the revelation of the Qur'an upon Allah's (ﷻ) subject Muhammad. Both the Qur'an and Muhammad (ﷺ) are light from the most important Source of light; here, *light* is understood to mean guidance and direction. In *Sūrah Saba'* these words are juxtaposed with the creation of the heavens and earth in an appreciation that extends into the life to come — an acknowledgment of Allah's (ﷻ) wisdom, awareness, and experience concerning what goes up and what comes down from heaven. Lastly, in *Sūrah Fāṭir* these introductory words of praise and thanks point to the human recognition of Allah (ﷻ) as the Creator of the heavens and earth, and of His dispatch of angels as messengers with wings. This is simultaneous with the realization that His might is expansive, and that the angels are of divine illumination as they come down from heaven to earth and then up again.

“All praise (and acknowledgment) is befitting Allah who has created the heavens and the earth, and brought into being thickening darkness as well as light.” Praise is the acclamation and thanksgiving by which a human subject or agent of Allah expresses his appreciation and admiration — for it is Allah (ﷻ) who is creator, giver, supplier, and provider. In a certain manner of speaking, the “self” of Allah has all the attributes of perfection as a matter of fact. Here Allah (ﷻ) depicts, in the course of man's praise and appreciation, the fact that He created the heavens and earth and issued (through the human senses) pronounced darkness as well as light.

In biblical discourse, the concept of “creation” is the divine action that calls the universe into existence and ensures its continuity. The god biblical Israel worshiped was foremost the lord of history who had powerfully rescued the covenant people from Egyptian slavery and facilitated their settlement in Canaan (Deuteronomy, 26:5–10). As Israel's savior, God was no less the creator of everything. Israel perceived creation as the starting point of that continuing historical drama within which God's will became reality. Israel, as some believe, regarded the universe as a three-storied structure incorporating heaven, earth, and the underworld (Exodus, 20:4). With them it entertained no direct notion of *creatio ex nihilo* (*creation of something out of nothing*, first explicit in 2 Maccabees,

7:28), but assumed the presence of preexistent matter. Also, it is said, Israel understood that creation stories were more disposed to answering the question, “What is the meaning of present creaturely existence?” than the question, “What really happened back then?” Unlike other belief-systems in that part of the world, Israel denied that the created order owed its existence to a battle between divine beings that resulted in the destruction of chaos-monsters.¹¹

Perhaps dating to King Solomon’s reign, the earth-centered narrative of the Book of Genesis (2:4–25) limits its creation concern to human origins. Using vivid verbs drawn from human handicraft and gardening, its author refers to Yahweh’s creation of living space (the garden), the means of sustenance (fruit trees), work (garden cultivation), and communal existence (man and woman). The Yahwist story abounds with God’s concern for humanity. The opportunity to name the animals attests human control over them (Genesis, 2:19). Nevertheless, the garden is Yahweh’s, and human acknowledgment of His sovereignty is expected.¹²

Ultimately achieving fixed written form in the sixth century BCE, the sophisticated Priestly narrative (Genesis, 1:1–2:4) depicts Israel’s God as the transcendent cosmic organizer who creates through an efficacious word. Numerous categories are presented within a six-day span: time (Genesis, 1:3–5), space (1:6–10), the creation of vegetation (1:11–13), celestial bodies (1:14–19), animals (1:20–25), and humanity (1:26–31). Thereupon the seventh day is portrayed as creation’s goal, whereby the Creator rests from labor! The Sabbath observance is universalized in a cosmic framework (Genesis, 2:1–3). With its pronounced use of the verb *to create* (*bara’a*), which throughout the Old Testament solely has God as its subject, this Priestly version celebrates an undeniably sovereign deity who stands over His creatures. Yet the earth putting forth vegetation (Genesis, 1:11–12), the celestial bodies controlling the calendar (1:18), and humanity exercising dominion over its environment (1:28) are accorded partial sovereignty. Made in God’s “image” and “likeness,” respectively denoting concrete and abstract similarity (Genesis, 1:26), blessed humanity is invited into a special relationship with God.¹³

Creation is also celebrated in the Psalms and in wisdom and prophetic texts. Creation via divine speech, so central in the Priestly account, is reaffirmed in Psalm 33:9, “For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.” The idea of humanity’s sovereignty within God’s own sovereignty asserted in the Book of Genesis (1:26–28) finds superb expression in Psalm 8. Psalm 104:24 extols the sheer wonder of creation, “O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all...” God’s sovereignty over chaos, attested at the beginning of the Book of Genesis (1:1–31) achieves much sharper restatement in Psalm 74:13–15, which personifies the restless waters as a chaos-monster.¹⁴

Wisdom literature also reveres the Creator. The articulation of the Book of Proverbs (3:19), “The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens,” is elaborately reinforced in the Deity’s many questions to Job and “lecture” on the hippopotamus and crocodile (Job, 38:4–39:30; 40:8–41:34). Then the mystery of creation is daringly highlighted in the Book of Proverbs (8:22–31) with its personification of wisdom as Yahweh’s firstborn creature. Moreover, living in the late exilic era, Second Isaiah (that is, Isaiah, 40–55) perceives creation as an all-encompassing category. More than being a cosmological event at the beginning of time, creation involves Israel’s historical origins as well as its present, which gravitates toward a promising future. Israel’s “Lord, who made all things” is identified as Israel’s “Redeemer” (Isaiah, 44:24; 45:8). In a glorious new act of creation, Yahweh will secure Israel’s rescue from Babylonian captivity.¹⁵

Making the transition from biblical tales to the more rational emanation coming from this mind-enlightening Qur’an, there manifests a fresh look at creation. The creation of the heavens and earth means the act of bringing into existence all the cosmic worlds above, some of which we may see with our eyes and through the use of technologically developed instruments, as well as the initiation of this calibrated world and fine-tuned nature in which we live.

This creation is inclusive of the universe, that is, all space and its contents; the study of the origin and development of the universe is called *cosmology*. The age of the universe is thought to

be between 10 and 20 billion years; mostly “empty” space, it is dotted with galaxies for as far as telescopes can make out. The most distant detectable galaxies and quasars, with the current level of technology, lie 10 billion light-years or more from Earth, and are moving farther away as the universe expands. Several theories have attempted to explain how the universe came into being and evolved, for example, the Big Bang theory of an expanding universe originating from a single explosive event, and the contradictory Steady State theory.¹⁶

A galaxy is an aggregation of millions or billions of stars, held together by gravity. Spiral galaxies, such as the Milky Way, are flat in shape, with a central bulge of old stars surrounded by a disk of younger stars, arranged in spiral arms like a Catherine wheel. Barred spirals are spiral galaxies that have a straight bar of stars across their center, from the ends of which the spiral arms emerge. The arms of spiral galaxies contain gas and dust from which new stars are still forming. Elliptical galaxies contain old stars and very little gas. They include the most massive galaxies known, containing a trillion stars. At least some elliptical galaxies are thought to be formed by mergers between spiral galaxies. There are also irregular galaxies. Most galaxies occur in clusters, containing anywhere from a few to thousands of members. Our own galaxy, the Milky Way, is about 100,000 light-years in diameter, and contains at least 100 billion stars. It is a member of a small cluster called the Local Group. The Sun lies in one of its spiral arms, about 25,000 light-years from the center.¹⁷

Discovered in 1963–1965, a quasar (from quasi-stellar object or QSO) is one of the most distant extra-galactic objects known. Quasars appear starlike, but each emits more energy than 100 giant galaxies. They are thought to be at the center of galaxies, their brilliance emanating from the stars and gas falling toward an immense black hole at their nucleus. Light from quasars shows a large red shift, indicating that they are very young. Some quasars emit radio waves, which is how they were first identified in 1963, but most are radio-quiet. About 3,000 are now known in a compact region of space, hence the suggestion that they spiral toward a massive black hole. The furthest are over 10 billion light-years away.¹⁸

Apart from those galaxies within the Local Group, all galaxies display red shifts in their spectra, indicating they are moving away from the Milky Way. The farther the distance into space, the greater are the observed red shifts, which implies that the more distant galaxies are moving away at ever greater speeds. This observation led to the theory of an expanding universe, first proposed by Edwin Hubble (1929), and to Hubble's Law, which states that the speed of one galaxy moving away from another is proportional to the former's distance from the latter. Current data suggest that the galaxies are moving apart at a rate of 30–60 miles/s (50–100 km/s) for every million parsecs of distance. To put it another way, a galaxy 1 Mly (mega-light-year or 1 million light-years) from the Milky Way would typically be moving away with a velocity of 30 km/s; a galaxy 2 Mly from the Milky Way at 60 km/s; a galaxy 100 Mly from the Milky Way at 3,000 km/s.¹⁹

“And caused to be [in the human perception of things] deep darkness and light.” This means that light and darkness were made relevant to man's visibility and senses. The verb *khalaqa* (created) is the initiation of something from nothing. The verb *ja'ala* (caused) is the development of something from something else, or the induction of one thing from another, or the transformation of an element into another; or even the transfer of a thing from one place to another place. In an *āyah* Allah (ﷻ) says, **“Wa-ja'ala minhā za-wjahā: And out of it [the self] He has caused its spouse [to exist]” (7:189).** And here He says, **“Wa-ja'ala al-ẓulumāti wa-al-nūr: And He caused darkness and light [to be]” (6:1).** Some would say that the sequence of night and day means that one develops in relation to the other. Expanding on the range of the relationship between the two words (concepts), it can be said that *ja'ala* represents the will of Allah for something to come into being through the agency of man, whereas *khalaqa* is the will of Allah (ﷻ) for something to exist without the participation of humans or any other being(s).

Darkness is simply the absence of light at a particular place. It is not necessarily the non-existence of light that defines darkness. In physics, light is the visible portion of the electromagnetic spec-

trum, corresponding to electromagnetic waves ranging in wavelength from approximately violet to red. Different wavelengths of light are perceived by humans as different colors. White light is composed of different wavelengths (colors), as may be seen by dispersing the beam through a prism. Light of a single color is called monochromatic, a term sometimes taken to mean a single wavelength (which is in practice unachievable). The best source of monochromatic light is the laser.²⁰

Light as an electromagnetic wave was deduced by scientists who derived an expression for the velocity of electromagnetic waves, using electric and magnetic quantities only, which equals the velocity of light. Interactions with matter (in particular, the photo-electric effect) show that light can also be viewed as composed of particles (photons) of definite energy; the polarization of light as a wave effect translates into the spin properties of photons. The current description of light is associated with particles whose behavior is governed by wave principles according to the rules of quantum theory. In geometrical optics (for example, lens systems), light is thought of as rays, traveling in straight lines, causing shadows for opaque objects; these rays change direction when passing between regions of different refractive index.²¹

Light, in its physical form, can come from many sources. Light bulbs produce light from electrically heated filaments. Thermal energy causes the motion of atoms and electrons in the filament, producing thermal radiation with a frequency spectrum related to the temperature of the filament. For filament temperatures of a few hundred °C, the radiation produced is mostly infrared; for higher temperatures (approximately 3,000 °C for household bulbs), light is produced. Mercury arc lamps produce light by electrical discharge (the arc) in mercury vapor. Fluorescent lamps rely on electrical excitation in a gas to produce ultraviolet radiation, which in turn causes the phosphor coating on a glass tube to emit visible light by fluorescence. Electrical discharge in gases, as in neon signs, or the application of heat to substances often produces light having specific spectra; this is related to the atomic structure of the substance, and is explained in terms of quantum theory.²²

Moving past the strictly physical, light is the self-evident and the revealing charge as sensed by both a person's eyes and his conscientious constitution. Allah (ﷻ) describes Himself as being *nūr* (light and illumination), **"Allah is the light [and illuminance] of the heavens and earth" (24:35)**. In mystical experience, light is the initiation of life, or the foundation of elements. It charges the ability to perceive and to actively think within the dimensions of existence. Thus light and refulgence (*nūr*) are accessible to all created beings. There is *nūr* in animation and *nūr* in validation. In such mystical experiences, *nūr* is at the inception of creation and appearance. In this view, Allah brought us out of the darkness of nonexistence into the light of existence. This transformation gave us light per Allah's (ﷻ) will and permission. Had it not been for this *nūr* our sight and our vision would have been irrelevant. Therefore, in a mystical depth, *nūr* is tantamount to perception. And in this way we can understand the Prophet's (ﷺ) *du'ā'*, "O Allah! Render cognition (*nūr*) in my hearing and in my vision, cognition... and render me an illumination (*nūr*)."²³ A person may thus go to the mirror of his heart and polish it with the remembrance, recall, and recognition of Allah (ﷻ) through *dhikr* and the recitation of the Qur'an, so as to acquire the lucent and beaming position of enlightenment.

Note that in the *āyah*, the word *nūr* (light) is singular, while the word *ẓulumāt* (multiple darkness) is plural. In fact, throughout the Qur'an, *nūr* always appears in the singular, but darkness (*ẓulumāt*) is invariably plural. This means that light is distinct and special whatever its sources. It may be a faint light or a strong light, but at the end of the day it is light. Darkness, however, occurs when there is a blockage or obstruction of light. Therefore, darkness exhibits in many shades or degrees, and this is as true for physical phenomena as for human ambiguity or twilight. The contrast here is responsible for the human understanding that truth and cogency are one while falsehood, which is the opposite of truth, is manifold and multifarious. Guidance is an inseparable integrity while waywardness, its opposite, is sundry and conflicted. The unity and integrity of Allah (ﷻ) is one, while its counterfeit opposite is

expressed in numerous religions, ideologies, and conceptualizations. Justice has one course; oppression has many avenues.

That multiple manifestations of darkness (*ẓulumāt*) preceded *nūr* in this *āyah* could be explained by darkness preceding the formation of the physical world. The Qur'an itself explains that the matter of existence was at its inception something obscure, that is, *dukhān* (smoke); or as some scientists would like to say, shining stars come out of a black hole with a charge of combustion and accelerated motion,

And He [it is who] applied His design to the skies, that were [yet but] smoke, and consequently He [it is who] said to them and to the earth, "Come [into being], both of you, willingly or unwillingly!" — to which both responded, "We do come in obedience" (41:11).

Along the same lines, a hadith says, "*Allah, Most High, created all, or everything that is, in darkness/obscurity and then sprinkled them with His light; whoever received a portion of that light has been guided and whoever missed it has gone astray.*"²⁴

Similarly, darkness precedes light in the non-material world. The vagueness and ambiguity of ignorance and carnal desires come before illumination and enlightenment. The light of discovery, knowledge, and guidance is acquired in humans. Whatever is not initially acquired, such as revelation and scripture, is subsequently procured through understanding and experience. Apostles and prophets are not born as such. They are privileged with such status after maturity and character consummation. A scientist is not born a scientist; and a sage is not a sage at birth. Scientific enlightenment is a process and spiritual elevation is a process,

And Allah has brought you forth from the abdomens of your mothers knowing nothing and then He caused you to hear and see and perceive so that you may be grateful (16:78).

A large number of Islamic scholars have interpreted the contrast between multifarious darkness and indivisible light as the difference between *kufr* and *imān*. Others give the explanation that Allah (ﷻ) created the heavens before the earth, the many layers of darkness before light, and Paradise before Hell.²⁵

The Universe Did Not Originate by Chance

“And yet, those who are bent on denying the truth regard other powers as their Sustainer’s equal.” Here, Allah (ﷻ) is explaining His power of creation and His ability to calibrate existence for man’s utility and benefit. Imagine all creation — the universe, the cosmos, the galaxies, the macrocosm, the nebulas, the world, and nature — and then consider the fact that all of it was created for man. Then imagine man’s natural state, this world, and all the evolution and development that takes place to accommodate him and protect him, all of which was pre-planned to adapt to his life and survival. Then after all this, think about how human beings omit this fact from their active thoughts by equating other things and beings with Allah (ﷻ). Given all the organization and planning associated with creation and growth that sustains human life, think about how we humans are unable and unwilling to organize our social life to conform with this larger organization, constitution, and administration that appears from the macrocosm to the microcosm. Man would have to be such a maverick to be out of synchrony with this divinely designed creation and divinely planned maturation.

“He it is who has created you out of clay, and then has decreed a term [for you] — a term known only to Him. And yet you doubt.” This is meant to rebuke the *mushriks*, those who compare others with Allah. Here, these *mushriks* who deny Him with a hostility are reminded of their corporeal reality and how there is a divinity of only one, to whom everything will return. It is Allah (ﷻ) who created them out of clay — soil that is malleable when moist but hard when fired. Virtually from mud is how Allah created Adam (ﷺ), the father of the social human being. All other forms of life on earth are created through the medium of muck and clay.

And from this creation of social, intelligent human life comes the process of procreation. Each individual, intelligent, social being is created out of a birth-line of soil and slime. The biology of man expands through nutrition, even during the pregnancy period when life is just in an embryonic stage. Simply put, life begins through a selective mating of two bloodstreams: male and female. Blood itself is nourished through an organic process by which an organism assimilates food and uses it for growth and sustenance. This organic process of nutrition comes from the plants and vegetation of the earth or from cattle and livestock that feed on these earthly foods. Edible meat comes from animals that eat edible vegetation. And thus every trace of life goes back through the channels of plant life that are part and parcel of earth and soil. So, the Power who created this cycle of life is certainly able to recreate another cycle of life in which the man who lives now will return to life in the coming world according to a timeline decreed by that Power — that is, the Creator Himself.

This term decreed by Allah is what human beings call a life span, generally thought to end with the onset of death. But Allah (ﷻ) also explains that there is another decreed term: the span of time it will take to revive and resuscitate a particular human life after death. This may all happen at once when everyone is resurrected for the Final Day, **“A term known only to Him.”**

The elemental truth that Allah (ﷻ) is the one who creates life has still not settled into the circulating thoughts of the public mind, especially the social consciousness that has been shaped and conditioned by secularism. In looking at life and its meaning from a purely material or empirical view, there is a secular group mind that characterizes life as the ability to grow, reproduce, and respond to such stimuli as light, heat, and sound. In this foggy mind, life on Earth is thought to have begun about 4 billion years ago. Evidence to substantiate this claim comes from fossilized threadlike chains of cells, discovered in 1980 in deposits in northwest Australia, that have been dated back to 3.5 billion years.²⁶ According to this view, there still is no frank and direct acknowledgment that God created life and supervised its growth, development, and maturity.

In trying to authenticate its suppositions, the secular mind has theorized that the original atmosphere of the Earth consisted of carbon dioxide, nitrogen, and water, and that complex organic molecules, such as amino acids, were created when the oxygen-free (and ozone-free) atmosphere of that time was bombarded by ultraviolet radiation or lightning. Without any reference to a reliable scripture, this scripture-less mind's attempts to replicate these conditions in the laboratory have successfully shown that amino acids, purine and pyrimidine bases (base pairs in DNA), and other vital molecules — that is, the building blocks of life, according to them — can be “created” in this way. Though it has been suggested by some in this frame of reference that life could have reached Earth from elsewhere in the universe in the form of complex organic molecules present in meteors or comets, others have argued that this is not really an alternative explanation because these primitive life forms must then have been created elsewhere by much the same process. Once the atmosphere changed to its present composition, life could only be created by living organisms, a process called *biogenesis*. Coined in 1870 by Thomas Henry Huxley, biogenesis is a biological term to express the hypothesis that living matter always arises out of other similar forms of living matter.²⁷ It superseded the opposite idea of spontaneous generation or *abiogenesis*, that is, living organisms may arise spontaneously out of non-living matter. This erroneous belief survived in the Euro-American secular mind until the mid-19th century, when the French chemist Louis Pasteur demonstrated that a nutrient broth would not generate microorganisms if it was adequately sterilized. The theory of biogenesis holds that spontaneous generation cannot now occur; it is thought, however, to have played an essential role in the origin of life on this planet 4 billion years ago. Hence — still — the wandering secular trend of thought can find no logical, philosophical, or historical proof to omit God from His act of creation.

The fact that all of existence anywhere and miniature models of things have been fine-tuned and calibrated for human endurance and development is a testimony to a wise will and an intense intellect that dwarfs all human capacities. Man's mind can only drift

into theories and roam into possibilities but it cannot say with authority anything categorical about the origin of the universe. Human knowledge (individually or collectively) acknowledges far horizons. Space is so vast that astronomers have had to devise special measuring units to keep their figures manageable. The basic unit of distance is the light-year, the distance light travels in one year, or about six trillion miles. But astronomers also use an even larger unit known as the parsec, which is equivalent to 3.26 light-years.

Observations of the universe are basically a look back in time. Light traveling from distant galaxies, speeding across at 300,000 km/s (186,000 miles/s), has taken billions of years to reach Earth. The most distant galaxies across billions of light-years are seen by man today as those galaxies were when the universe was younger. The modern view of the origins and future of the universe is based on the idea of a Big Bang that marked the beginning of the ongoing expansion of the universe. The popular view of the Big Bang, however, imagines galaxies flying away from one another out into empty space after a massive explosion. This naturally leads to questions about what happened before the Big Bang, and where it occurred. However, these questions arise from a misunderstanding of the Big Bang concept. Galaxies do not fly away from each other through space; rather, space itself expands, carrying the galaxies with it. The Big Bang was not an explosion in space, but an explosion of space and time. All of space and time arose in the Big Bang. In a sense, the way it is understood today, time and space have no meaning outside the context of the universe.²⁸

Human intellectual and scientific understanding at this point in time suggests that 10–15 billion years ago, the universe of space and time began, as an intensely hot cauldron of energy governed by physical laws that are still not completely understood. Within a tiny fraction of a second, the expansion after the Big Bang had moderated the conditions to a point from which the scientists' current understanding of physical laws can begin to describe what happened. The universe was expanding and cooling, but there may also have been a brief spurt of dramatic inflation in size — this is critical to understanding today's universe. If this sudden growth spurt did

occur, then the part of the universe that telescopes can survey today was merely a tiny fraction of the total.²⁹

Scientists have now been able to construct a history of the universe back to a tiny fraction of a second after the Big Bang took place. At that moment, it is believed, there occurred the first comprehensible event in the origin of the universe; that is, gravity emerged as a separate force from the single unifying force that had hitherto existed. Scientists estimate that the force of gravity broke free 10^{-43} seconds (0.0000000000000000000000000000000000000001 seconds) after the Big Bang. A fraction of a second after the universe was born, its temperature, we are told, is calculated to have been more than 100 billion °C (180 billion °F). Only 60 seconds later, it had fallen to 10 billion °C (today the universe’s average temperature is -270 °C, just 3 °C above absolute zero, the lowest possible temperature).³⁰ These “scientific first moments” are intellectual leaps into logical explanations given certain facts. The authoritative statement is still lacking. What happened before all this is still a mystery.

After no more than a 10-millionth of a second, the universe had become a sea of high-energy radiation — gamma ray photons characteristic of a temperature well over one trillion °C. At such an energy level, photons can produce a pair of particles, a matter particle and its anti-matter partner, which exist fleetingly before annihilating each other in a flash of gamma radiation. As the universe continued to expand, the photons dropped in energy as the temperature fell. Particle production ended, first for the heavy particles and then for the lighter ones. Most of the particle and anti-particle pairs were annihilated, leaving only a small residue — the protons, neutrons, and electrons that are known today. As the temperature dropped further, some of these particles combined to build simple atomic nuclei. Within half an hour this phase was over, and, for the next few hundred thousand years, the universe was an expanding gas of light nuclei and electrons in a sea of photons. It was an opaque fog until continued cooling allowed the atomic nuclei to capture electrons and form atoms of simple elements, mostly hydrogen and helium. Without the free electrons to

scatter, the photons streamed freely through space and the fog ultimately cleared.³¹

Matter was then free to respond to the influence of gravity alone. The first generations of individual stars formed from small knots in larger gas clouds that became whole galaxies of stars. The galaxies formed into clusters and superclusters that are still scattered throughout the universe today.³²

Is it possible for man to be sure of this picture? The Big Bang view of the universe is rather different from earlier versions. Ancient Egyptian cosmology featured the sky goddess Nut arched over Earth, with the Sun god Ra traveling across the sky every day. Greek thinkers removed gods from their cosmology, and constructed their worldview largely on philosophical grounds. A more scientific approach to cosmology began to emerge after the Islamic Renaissance and the European acquisition of this Islamic enlightenment. Thus, there was Copernicus, in the 16th century CE, who said that it was the Earth that traveled around the Sun. The current view is the latest step in scientific cosmology, but it is highly probable that this view will also be superseded.³³

Three important observations form the basis of the Big Bang model. The first emerged early in the 20th century, when observations revealed the expansion of the universe. This fits into Einstein's Theory of General Relativity, which describes the nature of space and time. The second key observation is the recent measurements of the abundance of light elements, especially helium, in the universe. These observations agree with the amount that the Big Bang model predicts to have been formed in its first few minutes. Perhaps the most compelling plank supporting the Big Bang concept was the discovery in 1965 of cosmic background radiation — an all-pervasive glow coming from all parts of the sky. In other words, the radiation from the era of the Big Bang when the universe became transparent is today's cosmic background radiation. In a sense, this is the glow of the Big Bang itself, cooled by the universe's expansion.³⁴

In the 1940s George Gamow proposed that, right after the Big Bang, the universe was so hot that thermonuclear reactions could

occur throughout space. This would mean that the early universe was filled with high-energy, shortwave photons (particles of light). In the 1960s, though unfamiliar with Gamow's ideas, Robert Dicke and J.E. Peebles of Princeton University in New Jersey theorized that the original radiation left over from Big Bang reactions would consist of low-energy photons that had been considerably stretched by the expansion of the universe. Dicke and Peebles decided to build an antenna to look for such radiation.

At about the same time, in another part of New Jersey, Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson, radio astronomers at Bell Laboratories, decided to use the company's new microwave horn antenna (designed to relay telephone calls to a communications satellite) for a purely scientific experiment: looking for radio waves emitted from the Milky Way. They suspected the noise they were trying to detect would be very faint, if it could be heard at all. To their surprise, they almost immediately heard a lot of static at the very short wavelength, or microwave, end of the spectrum. This noise came from all directions and did not vary with the time of day, or as the year progressed, with the seasons. For a brief time after their discovery, the scientists thought the noise might have been caused by the droppings of pigeons roosting on the antenna. They removed the birds, cleaned the equipment, yet they still heard the noise. By chance, talking to a colleague about another matter, Penzias learned of Peebles' and Dicke's efforts to find cosmic background radiation as evidence for the Big Bang theory. What the Princeton pair sought, the Bell Laboratories' duo had found. Penzias and Wilson received the 1978 Nobel Prize in physics.³⁵

Recent years have been exciting in cosmology, because new observations and dramatic developments have begun to allow scientists to choose between variations of the basic Big Bang cosmology and some alternative concepts to the Big Bang itself. In particular, the Cosmic Background Explorer (COBE) satellite revealed the incredible smoothness of cosmic background radiation, in all directions, challenging cosmologists to explain how the clumpy distribution of galaxies seen in today's universe could have had time to develop. Exactly how much time has passed in building

this pattern remains uncertain, since astronomers are only now beginning to agree on just how fast the universe is expanding.³⁶

Will the universe's expansion continue? Will it go on expanding until all the stars have died? The force of gravity governs the fate of the universe, so the question becomes: is there enough matter and energy in the universe to slow and stop the expansion? In mapping the distribution of matter, it is now clear that more matter exists than is detectable by current technology and instrumentation. This "dark matter" must surround many galaxies, including the Milky Way, to explain the motions of stars within them. There is more in clusters of galaxies, helping to hold them together. Seeking further evidence of this dark matter, studies are trying to determine what it is exactly: small dark planets, star-sized bodies, or something less familiar. Adding all this together, normal forms of matter appear to account for less than 10% of the matter needed to halt the expansion of the universe. But many cosmologists think that less than 10% is quite close to 100% percent in this instance.³⁷ Moreover, there are theoretical reasons for thinking the universe may in fact be on that tipping point between eternal expansion and ultimate halt and collapse. It may be that most of the matter in the universe is in forms as yet unseen,

All praise is due to Allah, who has created the heavens and the earth, and brought into being deep darkness as well as light: and yet, those who are bent on denying the truth regard other powers as their Sustainer's equals! (6:1).

Among the most mysterious components of the universe are neutrinos. They are unimaginably tiny subatomic particles. Yet some scientists suspect that neutrinos may form 90% of the mass of the universe, and provide enough gravitational pull to slow and eventually reverse the headlong flight of the galaxies. Despite their possible central role as the universe's glue, neutrinos carry no electrical charge and are so difficult to study that their nature remains elusive. The particles travel at the speed of light and can pass right

through the earth without even slowing down. Millions will pass through this page, and through you, while you are reading it.³⁸

Without Allah's (ﷻ) guidance in this matter the secular mind, from time to time, asks, "Are we aliens?" They say life may have originated in space and was brought to earth aboard a comet, according to a theory published in 1978 by the English astronomer Fred Hoyle and the Sri Lankan astronomer Chandra Wickramasinghe. The creation of living material involved too many coincidences for it to have occurred on earth, they say; it required all the resources of space. The astronomers argue that life probably formed elsewhere, then was deposited here by accident and thrived in earth's favorable conditions.³⁹

So, the problem in essence has never been about the presence of a deity as much as it is about the role, function, and power of this deity. The Arabian *mushriks*, who were the first to be confronted by this Qur'an, never questioned the existence and presence of God. To the contrary, they would always affirm His being — that He was the Creator, the Provider, the Owner, the One who gives life and deals death, in addition to the other attributes that are associated with deity and divinity. The Qur'an states as much in recalling what they would say.

The problem with the Arabian *mushriks* was their not extending the meaning of divinity and deity to include Allah's (ﷻ) authority over their lives, and to exclude the authority of others in His affairs. They were in this way opponents and enemies of His laws and legal values. These *mushriks* could not come to terms with Allah's (ﷻ) authority and dominance in their social and organized life. This is what made them *kāfirs* and *mushriks* even as they acknowledged the presence and existence of God. If God is the Creator, the Provider, and the Owner as they would confess; if only He has the capacity to create, organize, and administer this whole universe and the details of life itself; and if He knows their private thoughts and public affairs, their efforts and labor, then all of this would add up to the conclusive fact that it is only Allah (ﷻ) who is capable of exercising control and administration over their social and legal affairs.

Looking back at the past few centuries, there is reason to believe that there is a highly organized and extremely secret Yahūdi effort to use atheism, agnosticism, and secularism to plunge humanity into a state of doubt and uncertainty on one level and a mode of bestial life on another. The Yahūd have been partially successful in alienating the human mind from its Creator. But the inherent aptitude in human nature for binding to a divinity is so strong that humanity will eventually find its way to its Authority/Creator. The atheistic fad of the last two centuries has run its course. Atheism nowadays, for all practical purposes, is dead. What is still alive and kicking is secularism. The Yahūd will cling to this secular trend in human societies through its death throes. They have even nurtured fervent and fanatical secularists among the Muslims who pray and fast as they claim they are real and authentic Muslims.

The only way out of secularism, and all the heartache and insecurity that has accompanied it, is Islam. The Yahūd know this very well, and that is why they are targeting the Muslims today in every corner of the earth to try to abort their revival and destroy their self-assertion. The “war against terrorism” is a well-thought-out scheme by the Yahūd to sell the world audience, and even its Muslim constituent, an all-out war against all forms and shapes of this Islamic revival. Make no mistake about it, the Zionists and the imperialists are involved in a last-ditch effort to abort the up-and-coming Islamic wave.

For a long time now the Zionist Jews and the imperialist Christians have been rubbing their hands and twinkling their eyes at the naiveté of Muslims and their lack of Qur’anic insight and erudition. Gone are the days of missionary infiltration into the virgin areas of Africa and the uncharted territories of Asia. Gone are the gambits of communism and socialism that were meant to derail Muslims from their ideological and international duties. The Zionists and imperialists are now depending upon their colorful “Muslims” with their secular convictions to rescue them from the tidal wave of Islam,

And they conspired their conspiracy; and Allah is aware of their conspiracy — a conspiracy that wastes

away mountains. Do not think [for one moment] that Allah will break His promise to His emissaries. Indeed, Allah is supreme, an avenger [of injustice] (14:46–47).

There are legal systems in Muslim countries that are meant to tie the hands of all decent Muslims lest they move in an Islamic ideological direction. There are military establishments in Muslim countries that are not trained to kill invading forces and bury occupation armies; rather they are custom-made to attack their own Muslim population, beat them in the streets, throw them behind bars, and preserve the anti-Islamic status quo at any price — all in the service of Zionist and imperialist interests. The Muslim populace has to make the transition into a state of awareness that sees through all these policies and strategies that have chained and enslaved their two billion strong for decades and centuries.

We, the future generation of Islam, need to come to the realization that Zionism and imperialism have done an excellent job at hiding themselves within Judaism and Christianity. This sleight of hand has been perfected to such a degree that even Jews and Christians themselves no longer are able to tell the difference. That is why whenever hostilities break out against innocent and oppressed Muslims around the world, these Zionists and imperialists want to have it both ways: they want Muslims to be friendly because they are “Ahl al-Kitāb” while they expect the Muslims to turn the other cheek to their race-oriented and class-preference policies. This confused picture comes from the inability of the Muslims to understand how insufficient their reading of this Qur’an is. We Muslims have left many gaps; and these sponsors of crimes against humanity have simply made their way through our mental breaches and imposed their system of conflict on our life of peace. There is a full spectrum of well-thought-out ideas and a wide range of military establishments that interlock to ensure that we will not be able to see the light of day, the light of this Book, and the light of Allah (ﷻ).

Ideological Yahūd and political Naṣārā have the Muslims involved in sectarian wars and crazy zealotries. So long as they manage to pit Muslim against Muslim, they themselves secure more

time for their penetration and exploitation. Centuries of groundwork were preparation for what is happening today; morals and values did not just collapse in a few years, nor did scriptural concepts and divine perspectives crumble in a glimpse. Disarming committed Muslims and other scripturalists of their bond with Allah (ﷻ) — their sole source of inspiration and power — took hundreds of years of counter-Islamic organization and anti-Islamic coordination. We Muslims ourselves helped them reach this undesirable objective by losing interest in our *dīn* and permitting it to become just another creed or just another religion among others.

If these godless Jews and secular Christians running the world could have it their way, no scriptural Muslims would ever emerge again, even in their own lands, within their own territories, and inside their own countries. The “religious Zionists and imperialists” — in other words, Zionists and imperialists who sugarcoat themselves with religion — are ready to use all the weapons in their arsenals to make sure that there will never be an Islamic scriptural revival. They are using “Islamic institutions” and “Islamic clergymen” to try to subvert any linkage between “religion and politics” or between local justice and global equity. The Zionist-imperialist world may accommodate an “American Islam” that fits into its scheme of interests, but it will never in its lifetime accommodate an Islam of justice and equality — much less the regularization and preponderance of such justice and equality to be inclusive of the whole world.

These Zionist manipulators and imperialist managers of world affairs will throw money and munitions in every direction and to anybody who will bend “Islam” to adapt and suit their schemes,

Muslim men! Shave your beards.

Muslim women! Throw off your *hijāb*.

Muslim youth! Go to the pubs and bars.

Muslim husbands! Cheat on your wives.

Muslim wives! Go out and earn a living.

All of you! Become modern and “civilized.” When you do that you become real “Muslims” and true “believers.”

They need religious institutions and religious figures to get away with this forgery of Islam. And if there are outside of this grand plan some individuals, organizations, or movements that stand up for Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) then they are to be branded as terrorists and the Zionist-imperialist-led world should declare war on them until they are roundly defeated. Of course the mass media, the fourth estate so to speak, drives all of this into the public conscience. This media will highlight the “accomplishments” of the organized and civilized nations while either ignoring the Muslims of commitment and struggle or presenting them as bandits, criminals, fanatics, and terrorists.

While the committed Muslims are involved in this war of centuries or the clash of civilizations, there are those naive and simple-minded Muslims who cannot understand the nature and magnitude of this clash. They are busy excluding themselves from this real-life friction and withdrawing themselves from this conflict by concentrating their time and effort on matters of personal hygiene and the hairsplitting *fiqhī* opinions they argue about back and forth. They cannot see the militaries of the Zionist-imperialist world crushing this *dīn*, trying to uproot it from its sources by ejecting Allah’s (ﷻ) authority from human life and imposing the authority of concentrated, abusive, and false powers of particular nations and states in its stead. But if such Muslims do not take action and join their pacesetting brethren at the front lines, it may be too late, for the bullets and bombs will begin to drop in their own lives.

It appears that the purpose of these *āyāt* is to underscore the fact that Allah (ﷻ) does exist and that He is the only Creator. The calculations that went into the proportionality of the cosmos and the computations that makes life a fact could not have been as they are without a purposeful will and a discerning capability.

The history of the Sun and Earth play only a small part in this picture. Born long after the Big Bang, both will die long before the universe changes much from the way it looks today. Ideas on the origin of the Earth, other planets, the Sun and stars can be traced to the time of classical Greece. They range from an Earth-centered universe to one where the position of this tiny, life-generating

planet is placed in the context of an expanding universe populated by billions of stars with an unknown number of planets similar in composition and structure.

It was late in the 18th century that the geologist James Hutton, a Scot, captured in a few poignant words the vastness and immensity of time over which the Earth, the Sun, the solar system, the galaxies, and the universe have evolved. He noted that there is “no vestige of a beginning, no prospect of an end.” This phrase challenged the established thinking of a very limited time for the creation of the natural world and opened up a new era of geological and cosmological thought. Man lives on a planet that is circling a single star of apparently limitless energy. Yet, today, it is known that the engine of nuclear heat driving the Sun has a birth and a stable phase, and, as it runs short of hydrogen fuel, will go through enormous cataclysms. This process will absorb the Sun’s dependent planets, and eventually lead to its own slow “death.”⁴⁰

Historical views of Earth as part of the universe have varied over time. New concepts and theories, such as Einstein’s Theory of General Relativity, have offered scientists different perspectives on the origin of the universe and all matter. New technologies ranging from telescopes to satellites have opened up vast vistas within and beyond our solar system. Now available to scientists are tools to measure the composition and structure of matter racing through space. The characteristics of various forces at work, such as those driving the expansion of the universe, the clustering of stars, the condensation of cosmic gases, the orbits of planets, and the movement of meteorites are much better understood.

The Big Bang model for the universe is based on a number of observations. It is not speculation. Yet, as a model of how the universe evolved, it has been modified by cosmologists and scientists over time. New observations should lead to further changes as scientists continue to explore whether there is enough matter and energy in the universe to slow and stop the expansion started between 10 and 15 billion years ago.⁴¹

As gases condensed to form stars, there was a distinct tendency for these stars to cluster. The Milky Way Galaxy is an ex-

ample of a large spiral galaxy or cluster of stars composed of a thin, circular disk surrounding a central bulge. Interestingly, new technologies show that many galaxies, including the Milky Way, have more mass than can readily be seen. There also appears to exist at the core of some galaxies a central powerhouse generating narrow jets of high-energy particles streaming outward. Only more observations and theorizing will help to determine the significance of these phenomena.⁴²

Yet it is the stars themselves that offer so many clues to the origin of the universe and, ultimately, ourselves. They vary widely in size, color, and temperature. Stars are powered by nuclear reactions whereby two hydrogen nuclei are fused to form one helium nucleus. Known as nuclear fusion, this releases a substantial amount of energy. Knowledge of sequences through which stars may change from one state to another is now available. The Sun is no exception and can be seen as representative of an average star in the Milky Way. It generates light and heat, which are transmitted through space to help transform life on the surface of one of its planets, Earth.⁴³

Radiometric dating of ancient rocks on the Earth and its moon give some clue as to the age of the Solar System — about 5 billion years. Cooling and consolidation under gravity of interstellar gases and dust, it seems, went into the creation of the Sun and progressively hardened objects accreted and condensed to form the nine planets and their moons. Early in the period of planet formation, the sweeping up of solar system debris led to bombardment of planet and moon surfaces, a phenomenon dramatically depicted today by photographs of the cratered surface of the Earth's moon.⁴⁴

The Sun is the ultimate source of energy for life processes on planet Earth. As the Sun formed, it captured most matter in the Solar System, leaving only 0.1% to form the planets, their moons, asteroids, comets, and dust. The Sun possessed sufficient mass needed to generate electromagnetic or radiant energy at various wavelengths. The hot Sun mostly radiates shorter wavelength energy, especially at visible wavelengths. There are also large sunspots caused by magnetic storms on the Sun's surface. They can be ob-

served as visible dark patches and as areas of X-ray activity ejecting electrically charged particles known as the solar wind. Sunspot activity is not constant but is cyclic in behavior. When these particles meet the Earth's atmosphere dramatic visual displays occur, especially in polar latitudes, known respectively as the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) and the Aurora Australis (Southern Lights). Whether sunspots influence the weather is uncertain.⁴⁵

The spinning Earth orbits the Sun, traveling a distance of approximately 150 million km (93 million miles). Energy is received at a more or less constant rate, but is distributed unevenly because of the tilt of the Earth's axis, yielding seasonal changes in temperature away from the equator. Even so, the Earth processes its own heat engine: radioactive processes within its core help generate gases into the atmosphere and drive movements of its crustal plates. The presence of different gases, including water vapor, has provided that vital mixture of substances from which life has evolved, as well as the thin protective envelope high in oxygen and nitrogen that forms the atmosphere. Thus spaceship Earth, spinning systematically around the Sun, receiving heat, generating gases and driving its crust into mountains, offers various life forms an environment for developmental change. Over time these environments shift. Ultimately the future of the planet itself is tied to that of its solar system and the Sun.⁴⁶

These measurements and numerations could not have simply come about by chance. The more we ponder these “mathematical” arrangements the more we realize that there is a Creator — One who was there before the initiation of material beginnings and will be there after they have been exhausted. This fact will have its adherents and it will have its deniers. We understand this social fact the same way we understand the physical facts we are still discovering in the world and in the universe around us, **“Although He is Allah in the heavens and on earth, knowing all that you keep secret as well as all that you do openly, and knowing what you gain.”**

Societies Destroy Themselves When They Violate God's Laws

Yet whenever any of their Sustainer's illustrations comes to them, they [who are bent on denying His power presence] turn their backs upon it: and so they give the lie to this truth now that it has come to them. In time, however, they will come to understand what it was that they were wont to deride.

Do they not see how many a generation We have destroyed before their time — [people] whom We had given a [bountiful] place on earth, the life of which We never gave to you, and upon whom We showered heavenly blessings abundant, and at whose feet We made running waters flow? And yet We destroyed them for their sins, and gave rise to other people in their stead.

But even if We had sent down to you [O Prophet] a writing on paper, and they had touched it with their own hands, those who are bent on denying Allah's power would indeed have said, "This is clearly nothing but a deception!" They are saying, too, "Why has not an angel [visibly] been sent down to him?" But had We sent down an angel, all would indeed have been decided, and they would have been allowed no further respite [for repentance]. And [even] if We had appointed an angel as Our message-bearer, We would certainly have made him [appear as] a man — and thus We would only have confused them in the same way as they are now confusing themselves.

And, indeed, [even] before your time have apostles been derided, but those who scoffed at them were [in the end] overwhelmed by the very thing they were wont to deride. Say, "Go all over the earth, and behold what happened in the end to those who gave the lie to the truth!" (6:4–11).

The first few *āyāt* in this *sūrah* consisted of a mental journey into the creation of galaxies, stars, and the cosmos. The mind’s attention was then focused on earth and life itself, on how there is a succession of night and day. And in the quest for greater understanding, there has been an ongoing human discovery of the universe and how it takes a thinking being to put everything in the cosmos and creation into proportion and with deliberate proportionality to make human life possible. From this tour of the farthest distances man can identify and the information that goes with it, the Qur’an returns to the part of human history, the segment of human beings, the portion of human society, and the measure of the human mind that breaks away from acknowledging Allah as *the* Creator, having no match and no contender.

The natural mode of human thinking affirms Allah’s (ﷻ) creative power and authority equally. But there are people who will not accept this fact. There are some people who are not convinced there will be a life that follows this earthly one. After all these years of scriptural history, there are still people who believe in numerous gods. To complicate things, many of them claim to “believe” in one God, while they also believe in many authorities. The flow of the *āyāt* here spotlights the fact that there is only One God and there is only One Authority. And that One God and One Authority are the same. Revelation and scripture are meant to guide man along this trail of truth. Therefore, this lesson embarks on a course that exhibits individuals and peoples who are entangled in a web of deprivations and contradictions concerning the oneness of Allah’s (ﷻ) creative power and authority, **“Yet whenever any of their Sustainer’s [power] illustrations comes to them, they [who are bent on denying His power] turn their backs on it...”**

Regardless of whether these *āyāt*, or demonstrations of Allah’s (ﷻ) power, came to them through the Qur’anic channel or through the scientific channel, they refuse to listen. The Qur’an sparks the human mind to investigate creation, life, and history. Human beings from a Qur’anic perspective are expected to do their homework when it comes to God’s act of bringing the universe into existence. Social beings are required to carry out an investigation of prophets

in history, and whether or not there is legitimacy to the prophethood of Muhammad (ﷺ). The intellectual mind of modern times and all of its social research programs cannot be permitted to skip over the mission of Muhammad, making believe it did not exist. This history that contemporary social science scholars are avoiding is proof positive of Muhammad's (ﷺ) mission and every detail in it, **“Yet whenever any of their Sustainer’s illustrations comes to them, they [who are in denial of His power] turn their backs upon it..”**

There is as much mental and psychological satisfaction in this open Qur’an as there is in the open universe. And there is as much integration of divine creativity and authority in the physical sciences as there is in the social sciences. All of this, as it should, leads to its source: Allah, and only Allah (ﷻ). Any person or party that claims divinity or authority is false and offensive to the truth and the facts.

To “scoop up” the fine meanings of its choice words, at times the Qur’an must be read carefully and deliberately. In this *āyah* the wording is **“Sustainer’s *āyāt*,”** and not “God’s *āyāt*.” This is a reminder that even these people who are in denial of God are being sustained by Him, even when they are refusing and rejecting Him. And one of the manifestations of His sustaining them is His dispatch of prophets and messengers (ﷺ), and His revelation of scripture. Ergo, those people who say they believe in a Lord but do not believe in His scriptures and prophets are in their own way saying that they do not believe in God’s mercy and wisdom.

Reading these *āyāt*, the Muslims have to face the fact that there is a broad intellectual class of people who refuse to place their minds in the Qur’anic scripture, **“And so they give the lie to this truth now that it has come to them.”** What makes these people turn away from a mental and logical approach to Allah’s (ﷻ) book of truth — the Qur’an? Why do they seem to dismiss this Scripture without a second thought? They appear to reject what they choose to be ignorant of; that is, no reasoning, discernment, or thought-out rejection accompanies their dismissal of this Qur’an. The *āyah* indicates they are indisposed and averse to the *ḥaqq*, which could mean any of three or all three accessories: the Qur’an, the Prophet

(ﷺ), and this *dīn*, **“In time, though, they will come to understand what it was they were wont to deride.”** This means that it is only a matter of time before these scriptural rejectionists will be confounded with the serious consequences of their refusal to look into this Qur’an. They, at a distance, poked fun at the meaningful contents of this Qur’an, not knowing that their behavior was going to come back to haunt them.

In the time of Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) during the years in which the Qur’an was being revealed, its social laws (*sunan*) would apply to the *kāfirs* and *mushriks* who were in God-denial. First they suffered from a drought, then they lost at the Battle of Badr, and finally they were vanquished when Makkah was liberated (Yawm al-Faṭḥ). It is no secret that the folks of Makkah during that time were sarcastic and offensive toward Muhammad (ﷺ) and the Qur’an. Not bothering themselves with Allah’s (ﷻ) “promises and threats,” they showed contempt for His Prophet (ﷺ) and Book. In this vane they were no different than those societies in history that had opposed prophets and disclaimed scriptures. And like those doomed societies, **“...they will come to understand what it was they were wont to deride.”**

Such God-deniers typically come in three ranks. The first declines to read and understand what Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ) are saying; the second considers Allah’s counsel and His Prophet’s guidance but then claims that the Qur’an and the Prophet are lying; and the third rank compounds its rejection with insults, mockery, and ridicule. But in the final analysis, the Qur’an is a book of undeniable facts. In it, everyone has access to an ocean of accurate information coming from the Creator of the heavens and earth — He who developed night and day, created man out of dust, and the divinity in heaven and on earth who knows their covert and their overt, and all they have gained. Hence, those who obstinately object to His sole authority and divinity could only be classified as the miserable,

Do they not see how many a generation We have destroyed before their time — [people] whom We had given a [productive] place on earth, the life of which

We never gave to you, and upon whom We showered heavenly blessings abundant, and at whose feet We made running waters flow? And yet We destroyed them for their sins, and gave rise to other people in their stead (6:6).

Those who are in disavowal of Allah (ﷻ) and in opposition to His Messenger (ﷺ) are apparently blind to the rise and fall of civilizations or the progress and regress of societies. Power, which may preclude them from coming to grips with this fact, was also infused with formidable societies and vibrant cultures in the past. However, that power did not spare them the terrible consequences of failure and doom. Societies that have power are tricked by the affluence and prosperity that come with power. The first intended audience of this Qur'an in Arabia was the Quraysh who in comparison to earlier societies had little to be proud of in the form of modernity or technology. Nonetheless, the power they did have made them arrogant enough to reject better ideas and solutions that were coming to them through revelation. And this is characteristic of all such societies, hence Allah's (ﷻ) reminder in the *āyah*.

Consider, for instance, the inarguable, but nonetheless consequential, issue of man tampering (incrementally polluting) with the Earth's water cycle, and how that could ultimately lead to the destruction of his civil society. Earth, in contrast to all the other planets in the Solar System, has an abundant supply of water. Much of this, of course, lies in the oceans and seas — more than 97% — and is saline. The polar ice caps lock up slightly more than 2% of the remaining water, leaving fresh water of less than 1% to sustain life on Earth. Human needs are met by the water from rainfall, rivers, and underground supplies (plus a small amount from desalination plants). Water falls as rain and snow, and flows as rivers and glaciers before ultimately reaching the sea. It also sinks into the ground to form underground water reservoirs, to emerge as springs or to seep into river water. Fresh supplies of water are continuously needed, and social systems without scripture and God think that nature provides this supply through the water cycle.⁴⁷

The current understanding of the water cycle suggests that solar energy evaporates exposed water from seas, lakes, rivers, and wet soils, the majority of evaporation taking place over the seas. Water is also released into the atmosphere by plants through photosynthesis. During this process, known as *evapotranspiration*, water vapor rises into the atmosphere. Clouds form when air becomes saturated with water vapor. The two major types of cloud formations are a stratified or layered gray cloud called *stratus*, and a billowing white or dark-gray cloud called *cumulus*. Nimbostratus clouds and cumulonimbus clouds are the cloud types that are associated with rainy weather; nimbostratus clouds will bring steady rain, and cumulonimbus clouds will bring stormy weather.⁴⁸

Precipitation as rain, snow, or hail ensures that water returns to Earth's surface in a fresh form. Some of this rain, however, falls into the seas and is not accessible to humans. When rain falls, it either washes down hill slopes or seeps underground, and when snow and hail melt, this water may also sink into the ground. Rainfall also replenishes river water supplies, as does underground water. Snowfall may consolidate into glaciers and ice sheets which, when they melt, release their water into the ground, into streams, or into the seas.⁴⁹

Rivers pass through several phases on their journey from hilly and mountainous areas to the seas and oceans. In their early phases — that is, close to their sources in the hills and mountains — they have steep slope gradients and, therefore, move with high velocities. They carry rock fragments and have high erosive force. In these areas, the energy from these streams provides the potential for hydroelectric development. This potential has been harnessed in many places, such as in the foothills of the Himalayas in Nepal. On flat plains, rivers tend to wind their way in meandering courses; here, the water flow has lost most of its erosive capacity. Massive clay deposits may also give rise to fertile alluvial plains. During times of heaving rainfall, flooding can take place, and this is a serious issue along some of the major rivers of the world, such as the Mississippi in the United States, the Yangtze in China, and the Ganges in India.⁵⁰

There has been considerable human interference in the water cycle throughout recorded history, but much more so since the beginning of the 20th century. For centuries, humans have built dams across rivers to store water, which is then used for irrigation, or for domestic or industrial water supply. Dams have also been built to control river flooding, such as across the Hwang Ho River in China, and to produce electricity. The Aswan Dam across the Nile provides arid Egypt with essential water. The two highest dams in the world, more than 300 m (985 ft) in height, have been built across the Vakhsh River in Tajikistan. The dam with by far the largest reservoir capacity — 2.7 billion m³ (3.53 billion cubic yards) — is the Owen Falls Dam, across the Nile, in Uganda.⁵¹

Hydroelectric power is generated in several parts of the world, such as at Itaipu, across the Parana River, in Brazil; this dam can generate 12,600 megawatts of power. The building of dams in areas prone to earthquakes, such as Japan, however, causes great concern because of the potential for serious damage.⁵²

Water is necessary for agriculture, industry, and domestic use. Agriculture depends on rainfall, as well as on irrigation from stored water. The provision of water for domestic use, particularly the need for clean drinking water has become very important with the spread of urbanization. Reservoirs are often built to ensure urban water supplies and water is purified before being channeled to consumers. The discharge of industrial, agricultural, and domestic effluents into streams and lakes, especially in the 20th century, has reduced water quality and damaged aquatic life. These effluents include metallic substances; one of the most dramatic examples has been the discharge of mercury into rivers in Japan. This mercury has now entered the food chain through fish, creating serious health problems. The discharge of pesticides has also been detrimental to aquatic life, and excessive use of fertilizers, along with salts released into rivers and lakes by poor land use practices, have also altered the ecological balance.⁵³

Changes in air quality brought about by humans have also affected the water cycle. The use of fossil fuels to generate electricity and power transportation has resulted in substantial sulfur dioxide

and nitrogen oxide emissions. When these gases and water react, sulfuric and nitric acids are produced. These pollutants are present in clouds and fog, and fall with rain and snow as acid rain. A pH value of 5 in water is acidic enough to damage aquatic life. This acid rain phenomenon is most likely to occur in dense industrial centers such as those in the United States, Canada, and Europe. The problem, however, is not confined to these areas, as winds blow polluting gases over long distances. Acids can become concentrated in still waters and threaten aquatic life. The entire ecology of affected lakes, including the natural food chains, can be very seriously harmed.⁵⁴

How secular human societies have eroded the measures and standards Allah (ﷻ) has calibrated in this water cycle is yet another indicator of how man and human societies self-destruct. The end result is that when man’s way clashes with God’s laws, man is going to lose, suffer in the process, and finally self-disintegrate. The corruption and pollution of the water cycle by the greedy industrialized corporations of militarized societies is a sin — a major act of disobeying the Divine. Eventually Allah (ﷻ) will destroy such destructive societies and establishments. Soon thereafter, another generation and society will be tasked with upholding decent (divinely ordained) standards. It could be said that on this basis, a type of recycling of societies has been taking place throughout human history. Once a society is doomed because of its objection and rejection of Allah it becomes a memory, as if it never existed. The earth rotates, life goes on, and the once thriving and vibrant society that disobeyed Allah (ﷻ) is hardly retained in man’s recollection.

“Do they not see how many a *qarn* We have depleted in out-bound times [people] whom We had given a [unsparing] place on earth...” The word *yaraw* (*they see*) is in reference to historical and scientific sight, and the word *qarn* means people who belong to the same time frame. There have been scholarly differences about what the exact duration of this “time frame” is; a happy medium definition is about 70–80 years, though some have said it is a century or more while others have said it is 60 or even 40 years. Most appropriately, however, not focussing on any hard numbers, this time

frame may refer to the median age of individuals in a particular society at a particular time, which is generally not fixed. Some scholars define *qarn* as the socio-economic status of a particular people. A smaller group has said that it may be defined by a social condition of people who are overtly influenced by an important figure such as a prophet or a king. This may capture its meaning as it is used throughout the Qur'an. Thus, it appears that the people of Noah (ﷺ) were a *qarn* even though their time span reached around 1,000 years. Similarly, the people of Hūd, known as 'Ād, constitute a *qarn*, as do Thamūd, the people of Šālīh (ﷺ).⁵⁵ *Qarn* is also used in the Arabic language to refer to *time*; in today's mainstream usage of Arabic the word *qarn* refers to a century (100 years).

Today, there are societies and peoples who occupy this exact position in our world, behaving in an oblivious manner toward all the bygone powers of history who felt and thought the same way, and then were eventually destroyed because they chose to neglect, forget, and slight Allah (ﷻ). Look around — are there any people who are actively conscious of the social and psychological factors that caused the annihilation of previous civilizations? The seriousness of this issues demands that it be top of mind in the public conscience; a few well-informed academics here and there are not enough to stem the tide of destruction due on every society that breaks from Allah. The price for breaking from Allah (ﷻ) is very high indeed.

What do societies do to break with Allah? What are these serious sins for which Allah (ﷻ) decimates social orders and thriving modernities? Basically they are of two types. The first is objection and opposition to Allah's Apostles and Prophets (ﷺ), and rejection of the scriptures they are commissioned to deliver. The second is the moral relativism that often accompanies increasing affluence and expanding power, leading to an abdication of society's responsibility, especially that of its leaders and scholars. These wealthy, usually plutocratic, societies in their materialistic inclination away from God begin to exhibit symptoms peculiar to societies waiting to disintegrate. Some of these are frolicking, ungratefulness, vanity, arrogance, disregard for poor people, an excessive reverence for those in power,

and an inordinate social behavior characterized by the absence of morality and a preponderance of depravity. People in such a declining society feel self-centered because of wealth and resources. All this amounts to “spitting in God’s bowl” and poisoning the well out of which God provided them abundance and prosperity. This overall social trend in that type of society is capped by a pervasive absence of justice — toward itself first, and then subsequently other societies. Many an *āyah* in the watchful Qur’an diagnose these symptoms of ailing and self-destructing societies,

And such is your Sustainer’s punishing grasp whenever He takes to task any colony that is given to evildoing: verily, His punishing grasp is grievous, severe! (11:102);

And Allah propounds [to you] a parable: [imagine] a town that was [once] secure and at ease, with its sustenance coming to it abundantly from all quarters, and that thereupon blasphemously refused to show gratitude for Allah’s blessings, and therefore Allah caused it to taste the all-embracing misery of hunger and fear in result of all [the evil] its people had so persistently wrought (16:112);

But when it is Our will to destroy a settlement, We convey Our last warning to those of its people who have lost themselves entirely in the pursuit of pleasures; and [if] they [continue to] act sinfully, the sentence [of doom] passed on the settlement takes effect, and We break it to smithereens (17:16);

And how many a community that [once] exulted in its wanton wealth and ease of life have We destroyed, so that those dwelling places of theirs — all but a few — have never been dwelt in after them: for it is indeed We alone who shall remain when all else will have passed away! Yet, withal, your Sustainer would never

destroy a community without [first] raising in its midst an apostle who would convey to them Our *āyāt*; and never would We destroy a community unless its people are wont to do wrong [to one another] (28:58–59).

These divine words transpire through both natural and social upheavals. The “freak” occurrence of natural disasters, which often are not put in this scriptural context, ends up confusing many people, generally exhibited by their blaming God for a catastrophe that could have been avoided by His intervention. The biblical story of Noah (ﷺ) and the Mesopotamian epic of Gilgamesh both tell of a great flood that killed the majority of humankind.⁵⁶ Geologists have found evidence of severe flooding in the upper Persian Gulf that corresponds to the time of Noah (ﷺ) and Gilgamesh, but secular historians cannot agree on whether there was, in fact, a single especially severe flood. The area was, however, frequently inundated.

Floods drown people and livestock; destroy crops, leading to famine; and pollute drinking water, causing many diseases. The flooding of the Hwang Ho River in China (1931) killed 3.7 million people; many more died of starvation as crops were destroyed. One common outcome of earthquakes and volcanoes in coastal regions is a tsunami (tidal wave) that may cause as much damage and loss of life as the quake itself. The former capital of Jamaica, Port Royal, was built on the end of an eight-mile (12.8 km) spit of sand and gravel curving out around a bay. In 1692, the region was hit by an earthquake, causing most of the town to slide into the bay; the ensuing tsunami swept the remains of the town under the sea, killing more than 2,000 people. Flash floods occur when sudden torrential rain is focused in a narrow channel. A flash flood near Johnstown, Pennsylvania, USA (1889), overloaded a 72 ft (22 m) dam, which finally gave way, sending a wall of water and debris 30 ft (9 m) high into Johnstown, where 2,209 people died.⁵⁷

Earthquakes are another form of natural disaster. The greatest recorded vertical movement resulting from an earthquake was at Yakutat Bay, Alaska, USA (1899), when the coastline rose by 47.5 ft (14 m) in some areas. Japan is a seismic hot spot on the Pacific

belt with regular earthquake and volcanic activity. The worst earthquake in modern times took place in 1923 in Sagami Bay, reaching 8.3 on the Richter scale. Tokyo and Yokohama were badly damaged and the death toll was 142,800. This, however, was overshadowed by the quake that shook Shensi, China (1556), in which 830,000 died.⁵⁸

In 1970 Peru was hit by an earthquake whose epicenter was miles offshore beneath the Pacific Ocean. The nearest coastal town, Chimbote, was badly damaged, but did not suffer great loss of life. However, 30 miles (48 km) inland, the quake knocked a half-mile (0.8 km) crust of snow off the 21,860-foot Nevado Huascarán Mountain, bringing down millions of tons of rock that destroyed the village of Ranrahica and half of the town of Yungay. The death toll was an estimated 40,000.⁵⁹

Four major natural disasters struck in the period from late-1999 to the middle of 2000. In the second half of 1999, around 17,000 people died when a 7.4 Richter-scale earthquake hit Izmit, an industrial town 65 miles (105 km) east of Istanbul in Turkey. Around the same time, a 190 mph (300 km/hr) super-cyclone hit the state of Orissa in eastern India, creating a 30 ft (9 m) tidal wave that obliterated entire villages. Around 10,000 people were killed and 15 million left homeless. Mudslides in Venezuela in the end of 1999 were Latin America's worst natural disaster of the 20th century. The slides, which came in the wake of torrential rains, killed up to 50,000 people. From early- to middle-2000, a tropical low-pressure system off the coast of Mozambique brought violent rain and the worst flooding for 40 years. Hundreds of thousands were left homeless and 700 killed by three cyclones — Eline, Gloria, and Huda — in three months. Eline was measured gusting at 74.5 mph (120 km/hr). At the same time, the Horn of Africa was suffering the worst drought in 15 years.⁶⁰

These natural disasters and many others are related to what human beings are doing on earth. This human impact on the environment has its social roots and its psychological structure. Consider how man triggers natural disasters that are observable in light of the science available today. Over three millennia ago, most

of the globe, save the tundra or desert, was covered with forest of one sort or another. The chief effect of humans on the environment before the Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries was in the destruction of the Earth's forest cover.

When populations were small, forests could survive the human use of trees for fuel and building material. In the time of Roman Emperor Julius Caesar (100–44BCE), more than half of France — approximately 140,000 square miles (363,000 km²) — was covered in forest. By the 1780s, on the eve of the French Revolution, this had been reduced to around 23,000 square miles (60,000 km²).⁶¹

The gradual loss of the Earth's forests leads to erosion as topsoil is exposed to rain, and therefore to a gradual loss of fertility. One of the first to recognize this was the American philologist and ecologist, George Perkins Marsh (1801–1882), who observed that in landscapes damaged by extensive tree-felling, rivers dry up more quickly in summer, and in winter collect torrents whose strong flow further changes the shape of the landscape. Estimates in 2000 reveal that on arable land in the US, soil is being removed eight times more quickly than it is being formed, and that 4 billion metric tons are being swept into rivers every year.⁶²

The changing balance between living organisms and agricultural and industrial processes has disrupted the carbon cycle, the sequence in which carbon released by respiration is reabsorbed by plants during photosynthesis. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) produced by the burning of fossil fuels in industrial and automobile engines has led the CO₂ content of the Earth's atmosphere to rise from 280 parts per million (ppm) in the pre-industrial era to more than 350 ppm now, helping to create the greenhouse effect. The emission of greenhouse gases is also linked to the depletion of the ozone layer, a band of ozone gas (O₃) in the upper atmosphere that prevents ultraviolet solar rays from penetrating the Earth's atmosphere. Ozone is destroyed by chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and other gases; a NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) satellite survey of 1991 revealed that the ozone layer had reduced by 4–8% in the northern hemisphere and by 6–10% in the southern hemi-

sphere between 1978 and 1990. The resulting increase in ultraviolet radiation reaching the earth's surface may have contributed to higher rates of skin cancer in humans.⁶³

The nations emitting the most greenhouse gases are the US, followed by China, Russia, Japan, India, Germany, the UK, Indonesia, France (despite 70% of its electricity coming from nuclear power), Italy, and Canada. Heads of state meeting at the 1997 United Nations summit on global warming, held in Kyoto, Japan, agreed to limit emissions of industrial gases such as methane, nitrous oxide, sulfur hexafluoride, hydrochlorofluorocarbons, and perfluorocarbons. Percentage reductions below the 1990 levels were agreed by the European Union (8%), the US (7%) and Japan (6%). This summit failed, however, to agree upon penalties for non-compliance with the treaty.⁶⁴

These details with all their dire consequences are conveniently and arrogantly dismissed by people in power and people under the sway of power. They shrug off the fact that there is a God-calculated balance in the cosmos, in the world, and in their own lives. The element of justice that keeps everything in harmony is what these people in power want to smother. Justice entails their shouldering responsibility in a way that does not violate God's trust and authority. For them, the easy way out is to claim this authority for themselves, and then superimpose it on their citizenry and countries. When they do this they take what belongs to God (ultimate authority) and confer it upon themselves. Thus, without the religious fanfare about it, these power-centric rulers and executives become gods.

When Allah (ﷻ) speaks of the ruin of civilizations, man has a history to consult, to weigh the events that led to such civilizational terminations. However, today as yesterday, the people in power do not want to be reminded of what happened to their historical peers who were pursuing the same materialistic, secular, and mostly godless objectives. Below is a short list of these leading ancient societies and civilizations,

1. Sumerian civilization (3600BCE) – lasting for a duration of 1,800 years, it collapsed in 1738BCE. It was located in the Eu-

- phrates-Tigris Delta (now Iraq), and its dominant states included the Sumer and Akkad Empires (2334–2193BCE and 2112–2004BCE respectively). Its religion or philosophy centered on a pantheon of gods including Enlil and Tammuz.
2. Egyptian civilization (circa 3400BCE) – lasting for a duration of approximately 3,900 years, it came to an end in 525CE. It was located in the lower Nile basin (Egypt), and its dominant state was the Middle Empire (2210–1790BCE). Its religion or philosophy was based upon a pantheon of gods including Isis, Osiris, and Horus.
 3. Indian civilization (circa 2500BCE) – lasting for a duration of 550 years, it collapsed in 1950BCE. It was located in the Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa, Indus, and Ganges valleys. Its religion or philosophy is largely undetermined.
 4. Minoan civilization (circa 2000BCE) – lasting for a duration of 600 years, it collapsed around 1380BCE. It was located in Knossos, Crete, and the Cyclades (now Greece), and its dominant state was Thalassocracy of Minos (circa 1750–1400BCE). Its religion or philosophy was related to goddess worship.
 5. Hittite civilization (1900BCE) – lasting for a duration of 700 years, it collapsed in 1200BCE. It was located in Kushara, Anatolia (now Turkey), and its dominant state was the Hittite Empire (circa 1450–1200BCE). Its religion or philosophy focused on a pantheon of gods including Inar and Telpinu.
 6. Chinese civilization (circa 1600BCE) – lasting for a duration of 1,800 years, it collapsed in 220CE. It was located in the Yellow River Basin and its dominant states were the Qin and Western Han Empires (221BCE–172CE). Its religions or philosophies consisted of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism.
 7. Austronesian civilization (1500BCE) – lasting for a duration of 3,200 years, it finally collapsed around 1775CE. It was located in the Solomon Islands, and its religion or philosophy venerated ancestor spirits and Mana (a supernatural power).
 8. Babylonian civilization (1930BCE) – lasting for a duration of 1,300 years, it ended in 539BCE. It was located in Lower Mesopotamia, and its dominant state was the Babylonian Em-

- pire (586–539BCE). Its religion or philosophy varied through Zoroastrianism, astrology, and Judaism.
9. Inuit civilization (circa 1400BCE) – lasting for a duration of 3,200 years, it came to an end around 1850CE. It was located in Beringia (the area between what is today western Alaska and Siberia), and its dominant state was Thule (circa 1150–1850CE). Its religion and philosophy centered around a pantheon of gods including Sedna (seal goddess) and the iceberg spirit.
 10. Greek and Roman civilization (circa 1300BCE) – lasting for a duration of 1,800 years, it survived until 558CE. It was located on the Greek mainland and the Aegean Islands, and its dominant state was the Roman Empire (31BCE–378CE). Its religion or philosophy, over time, consisted of the philosophies of Platonism, Stoicism, Epicureanism; a pantheon of gods including Mithras (Roman) and the Olympians (Greek); and later Christianity from 64CE.
 11. Central American civilization (circa 1200BCE) – lasting for a duration of 2,700 years, it came to an end in 1550CE. It was located along the Gulf Coast of what is now Mexico (Olmec), and its dominant state was the Mayan Empire (250–900CE). Its religion or philosophy focused on human sacrifice and penitential self-mortification.
 12. Syrian civilization (circa 1200BCE) – lasting for a duration of 2,200 years, it came to an end in 970CE. It was located in Eastern Cilicia, and its dominant state was the Achaemenian Empire (547–331BCE). Its religion was Zoroastrianism.
 13. Spartan civilization (circa 650BCE) – lasting for a duration of 1,000 years, it collapsed in 395CE. It was located in Laconia, Peloponnese Peninsula (now Greece), and its dominant state was Sparta (circa 620–371BCE). Its religion or philosophy was called Eunomia (good order) developed from the laws of Lycurgus (7th century BCE).
 14. Far-Eastern (Mongolia) civilization (589CE) – lasting for a duration of 1,400 years, it is barely in existence nowadays. It was located in Si Ngan (Sian-fu), Wei Valley, China, and its dom-

- inant states were the Mongol Empire (1279–1368CE) and the Manchu Empire (1644–1912CE). Its religion or philosophy was Mahayana Buddhism.
15. Khmer civilization (600CE) – lasting for a duration of 800 years, it came to an end in 1432CE. It was located on the Cambodian coast, and its dominant state was the Angkor Kingdom (802–1432CE), based in the capital city of Yasodharapura. Its religion or philosophy started with Hinduism, and then later became Buddhism.
 16. Far-Eastern (Japan and Korea) civilization (645CE) – lasting for a duration of 1,300 years, it survives until today. It is located in Japan via Korea Naniwa (Osaka), and its dominant state was the Tokugawa Shogunate. Its religion or philosophy has gone through some phases including Mikado-worship, Shintoism, Buddhism, and Zen philosophy.
 17. Western civilization (612CE) – lasting for a duration of 1,300 years, it continues as the dominant civilization today. It has been located in Europe with an emphasis on Britain and France, and also at present in the Americas; its dominant states were the Habsburg Monarchy (1493–1918CE), the French (Napoleonic) Empire (1792–1815CE), the British Empire (1757–1931CE), and the now the United States of America (1776–present). Its religion has gone from Christianity to secularism.
 18. Orthodox Christian (680CE) civilization – lasting for a duration of 1,300 years, it continues until the present. It is located in Anatolia, Turkey, and its dominant state was the Byzantine Empire (395–1453CE). Its religion is Orthodox Christianity.
 19. Hindu civilization (circa 775CE) – lasting for a duration of 1,100 years, it continues until the present. It originated in Kanauj, Jumna-Ganges, and its dominant states were the Mughal Raj (circa 1572–1707CE) and the British Raj (1818–1947CE). Its religion is Hinduism.
 20. Orthodox Christian (Russian) civilization (circa 950CE) – lasting for a duration of 1,000 years, it continues until the present. Its cradle was the Upper Dnieper Basin, and its dominant

- state was the Muscovite Empire (1478–1917CE). Its religion is Orthodox Christianity.
21. Zimbabwean civilization (1150CE) – lasting for a duration of 350 years, it came to an end in 1500CE. It was located near today's Masvingo, Zimbabwe. Its dominant state was the Trading entrepôt (1250–1450CE), and its religion was based on the Shona deities.
 22. Ottoman civilization (1324CE) – lasting for a duration of 600 years, it came to an end in 1922CE. It was born near Bursa, Turkey, and its dominant state was the Ottoman Sultanate (1372–1922CE). Its religion was Islam.
 23. Andean (Inca) civilization (1410CE) – lasting for a duration of 100 years, it collapsed in 1533CE. Its place of origin was Cuzco, Peru, and its dominant state was the Inca Empire (1438–1533CE). Its religion or philosophy centered around a pantheon of gods including Viracocha (god of rain), Inti (Sun god), and Quilla (Moon goddess).
 24. Communism (1848CE) – lasting for a duration of 150 years, it collapsed in 1991CE. Its place of origin was Western Europe and its dominant states were the USSR (1917–1991CE) and the People's Republic of China (1949–present). Its “religion” or philosophy was Marxism-Leninism (USSR) and Maoism (Mainland China).⁶⁵

The overwhelming majority of these civilizations and ways of life have vanished from the face of the earth. Only artifacts of anthropological interest remain to tell their story. Some of them were totally eradicated by Allah, while others gradually diminished or are gradually diminishing because of their clash with Allah's (ﷻ) authority. These sometimes vicious and wicked civilizations were either eradicated all at once, or dismantled bit by bit through cycles of “hard times,” intermittent warfare, or a combination of natural and man-induced calamities. At times some of these civilizations would clash in the most violent way with others, mutually eroding their staying power. The outcome of such godless social behavior, with injustice as its bedrock, would give way either to other respon-

sible powers who were in conformity with Allah's (ﷻ) will and in obedience to His orders or another segment of humanity who, to the best of their knowledge, were justice-centered.

Despite all of this evidence from history, people in general tend to be deceived by the ostentatious display of power by royal rulers, oppressive autocrats, and tyrannical chief executives. Such people look at the political landscape of the world and, seeing these false figures at the height of their power, think there is something redeeming about them, with the obvious implication that they otherwise could not have ascended to such a level of power. Any student of scripture knows this to be an inaccurate reading of the rise and fall of civilizations. Though a civilization may project an aura of power for the moment, the moving picture of that civilization, beyond that fleeting historical instance of power, is one of decline because it is contrary to the Creator. Therefore, the only course left to it is decomposition leading to ultimate termination. Allah's (ﷻ) words, **“So We doomed them because of their sins,”** is time tested. This scriptural quote expresses a social law. And there are many other similar formulas that convey social laws in this Qur'an of justice. Put together, the social laws (*sunan*) enunciated in this Scripture for justice outline an “Islamic interpretation of history.”

The Qur'anic sentence points to the historical truth that societies and individuals are doomed because of their sins, that is, their estrangement from God. It is God who sees to it that these sinners and evildoers are ruined. This social law has been working its way in the history of civilizations even though individuals and populations may be oblivious of it. No society that tolerates sin to the point of regulating it, and then eventually promoting it can avoid being damned. Morals come from God, and no other source; therefore, no society in denial of God can purport to be living by a high moral standard. Secular historians, through their anthropological investigations and by essentializing the European narrative of history as a reference point, have tried to give all of human history a materialistic “natural selection” slant, and hence are wont to ignore the scriptural reasons for the crumbling of empires.

Empires and dynasties witnessed their own undoing because they failed the moral test of governance and social behavior. Starting with the Egyptian empire in approximately 3200BCE, the world saw a number of other ancient empires, all of whom collapsed because of their violation of Allah's (ﷻ) *sunan*.⁶⁶ Of all the previous empires, none remotely approached the might of the Roman Empire. Beginning with Sardinia, from the First Punic War (264–241BCE), Rome's acquisition of territory was remorseless. By the second century CE, the Empire extended from Scotland's Antonine Wall into Arabia as far as the Euphrates River, and from Armenia to Morocco. The first Roman ruler to be proclaimed emperor was Octavianus, the great-nephew of Julius Caesar (100–44BCE). Octavianus assumed the name Augustus and reigned from 27BCE for 41 years. The last emperor was Theodosius I (ruled, 379–395CE), after whose time the Eastern Empire was given to his son Arcadius, while another son, Honorius (ruled, 395–423CE), took the Western Empire of Italia, Africa, Hispania, Illyria, Gaul, and Britain. In 410CE Rome was sacked by Germanic Vandals and Visigoths, and the Western Empire came to an end.⁶⁷

Arcadius was the first ruler of the Byzantine Empire, which developed from the eastern half of the Roman Empire. The capital, Constantinople (modern Istanbul), was founded by Roman Emperor Constantine in 330CE as a Christian city. Justinian (ruled, 527–565CE) was its greatest emperor; he retook northern Africa from the Vandals and captured much of present-day Italy, including Rome. Justinian laid the legal foundation of much modern civil law in the *Pandectae* (533CE). The basilica of Hagia Sophia (*Holy Wisdom*, in Greek) in Constantinople was completed in 533CE. In 1453, the 198th and last Byzantine emperor, Constantine XI, fell fighting an invading Ottoman army at the gates of Constantinople. A large part of western Europe was loosely held together in the Holy Roman Empire for 1,008 years between 800 and 1808CE. Charlemagne (747–814CE), king of the Franks, received the title of Holy Roman Emperor at the hands of Pope Leo III in 800CE.⁶⁸

The title of emperor and the center of power moved to the German princely states from 1138CE, first with the Hohenstaufens,

then the House of Luxembourg, and finally the Habsburgs from 1278CE until the final fall of the empire. The 57th emperor, Frances II (1768–1835), who was also emperor of Austria and king of Hungary, was defeated and deposed by French Emperor Napoleon I (ruled, 1804–1815), and only reinstated after the Congress of Vienna in 1814–1815. By that time, however, the Holy Roman Empire had been exhausted of all its political power or influence.⁶⁹

One of the most dramatic phenomena of the European Middle Ages was the rise of the Mongolian Genghis Khan (meaning, *Universal Ruler*), who lived from circa 1162–1227BCE. Born Temujin, he succeeded his father at age 13 and then spent 30 years crushing all Mongol resistance, emerging in 1206CE as Great Khan of all the Mongols. His army overran northern China in 1211CE, slaughtering any who stood in its path. Genghis Khan's ruthlessness paralyzed all opposition as his territories expanded eastward to the Pacific coast and westward to the Black Sea — the largest empire the world had ever known by some accounts. Genghis was succeeded by his third son Ogodei, who reigned until 1242CE. From 1260CE Genghis's grandson, Kublai Khan (1214–1294CE), based in Kaanbaligh (Beijing), ruled the vast empire for its last 34 years. It now extended also from the Arctic to Malaya and from Korea to Hungary. Kublai Khan became the first emperor of the Yuan dynasty of China and made Buddhism the state religion, but after his death, the Mongolian nations broke away from the empire, leaving only a relatively unified China.⁷⁰

In the western hemisphere, the first emperor of the Incas was Manco Capac circa 1200CE. The Inca empire, with its capital at Cuzco, eventually stretched most of the way along the chain of the Andes mountains, all the way from present-day Chile in the south to Ecuador in the north. The emperors were regarded as semi-divine descendants of the Inca sun-god, Inti. The empire was eventually destroyed by the Spanish in 1532 and the last of the Inca emperors, Atahualpa, was killed in 1533. In Mexico, the Aztec state was founded in the 12th century and began to expand into an empire under Montezuma I (circa 1390–1464). The Spanish conquistador (conqueror) Hernando Cortes (1485–1547) invaded

Mexico in 1519 and killed the last Aztec emperor, Montezuma II (1466–1520).⁷¹

The “discovery” of the “New World” by the Italian Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) in 1492 gave rise to another phase of imperialism. The great wealth in gold and silver of these vast territories financed the rise of the much smaller European powers of Spain and Portugal for over two centuries. Fabulous argosies (merchant ships) of treasure crossed the Atlantic, carrying silver from northern Mexico and upper Peru (now Bolivia), and gold from the Minas Gerais region in Brazil. The Spanish and Portuguese powers had to appeal to the pope to arbitrate their division of the new lands. Pope Alexander VI (ruled, 1492–1503), himself a Spanish Borgia, drew up a line in 1493 at a longitude roughly 300 miles (500 km) west of the Azores. But the Portuguese demanded the line be moved further west and the Treaty of Tordesillas, signed in 1494, was to give them the as yet unknown land of Brazil, which was only discovered in 1500 by the Portuguese explorer Pedro Alvares Cabral (circa 1467–1520).⁷²

The expansion of Russia into a formidable empire began with Tsar Peter the Great (1672–1725), who devoted his enormous energies to westernizing the fairly primitive conditions in Russia and to expanding into Ottoman and Swedish territories. Catherine the Great (1729–1796) expanded the Russian empire further with the partition of Poland, and wars against Ottoman Turkey and Sweden.⁷³

This expansion was checked by the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) in France, who took the lead after the French Revolution of 1789 and swept across Europe in a series of whirlwind campaigns, subduing large parts of Italy, Austria, Spain, and Portugal, as well as Egypt and Syria. But his empire was of short duration. Napoleon was finally defeated by a combination of British, Prussian, Dutch, and German allies in 1815 at Waterloo (present-day Belgium) and the boundaries of France reverted to close to what they had been before. France’s Second Republic was also brief. Napoleon III, the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, was proclaimed emperor in 1852. He attempted to strengthen his position by annexing Savoy and Nice in 1860 and tried to set up a puppet government in Mex-

ico. His short-lived empire collapsed after his defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871.⁷⁴

The British Empire was the most extensive and powerful of modern empires. In 1945 it covered 14,435,060 square miles (37,386,632 km²). From its beginnings in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (ruled, 1558–1603), it grew in the 17th century with the acquisition of islands in the West Indies and Canada. In the 18th century, it expanded to the east with India, Singapore, and New South Wales, Australia. The 19th century saw the division of Africa between the European powers and the addition of Burma and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). By the 20th century, most of the former British Empire had been “granted independence,” including the dominions of Australia, Newfoundland, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa (1931), and India (1947). The former dominions of the empire formed the British Commonwealth in 1931, which by the 1990s grew into an international “organization” for mutual aid and support with 53 member states.⁷⁵

The European scramble for Africa in the 19th century was the last great surge of European colonialism. Ports had been established around the African coast and slaves exported for centuries, but it was not until the late-19th century that conquerors (euphemistically called explorers), missionaries, and traders began to penetrate into the interior. By 1900, the continent was divided between Britain, France, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Germany. By the start of WWI, the only “independent” nations in Africa were Liberia and Ethiopia. After WWII, the German and Italian colonies were confiscated by the remaining colonial powers, but not long after, most African nations, whose boundaries were determined by their colonial occupiers, were “granted independence” in the 1960s. The last European nation to hold imperial territories was Portugal, which retained Mozambique and Angola until 1975.⁷⁶

However, it soon became apparent that all of this mainstream-media talk of “independence” was nothing but a sham, intended to dress up a more insidious occupation. The late-20th century saw a new type of imperialism that was imposed on many of the developing countries of the world. The dictates of economic liberalism have

made these countries once again satellite states, this time to the demands of multinational companies, who provide “capital” (loans) and “jobs” (subsistence) in return for cheap labor and tax incentives. Today, information technology corporations, oil companies, and multinational banks are seen as the new emperors.

With this running scene of empires and civilizations that have come and gone as ongoing evidence, the Qur’anic social law applied then as it applies today: they perished because of their evil-doing and transgression of Allah’s (ﷻ) will. Injustice in a society is like a cancer in a body; eventually if the injustice is not rectified the body/society will succumb. Allah’s (ﷻ) words are not only true, they are a warning to erring societies and their leaders, **“And We decimated them due to their evildoing.”**

The moral disintegration of a society is a sure sign of its withering away. In *The Death of the West*, listen to what the author says about how the moral depravity of a society condemns its people to tread upon the path of the failed civilizations they should have learned from,

What people truly believe about right and wrong can better be determined by how they live their lives than by what they tell the pollsters. If so, [the moral condition of Euro-America is telling]. As late as the 1950s, divorce was a scandal, “shacking up” was how “white trash” lived, abortion was an abomination, and homosexuality the “love that dare not speak its name.” Today, half of all marriages in America end in divorce, “relationships” are what life is about, and the “love that dare not speak its name” will not shut up. The collapse of marriage and marital fertility, says Belgian demographer Ron Lesthaeghe, is due to a long-term “shift in the Western ideational system” away from values affirmed by Christianity — sacrifice, altruism, the sanctity of commitment — and toward a militant “secular individualism” focused on the self.

When in 1968, Pope Paul VI issued his encyclical against contraception, *Humanae Vitae*, the almost uni-

versal hostility with which it was received, even among many Catholics, bore witness to the sea change in society. Yet the late pope has proved prophetic. As Archbishop Charles J. Chaput of Denver writes, in *Humanae Vitae* Pope Paul predicted four consequences of man's embrace of a contraceptive mindset: (1) widespread "conjugal infidelity and the general lowering of morality"; (2) women would no longer be man's "respected and beloved companion," but serve as a "mere instrument of selfish enjoyment"; (3) it would "put a dangerous weapon in the hands of public authorities who take no heed of moral exigencies"; and (4) the treatment of men and women as objects, and unborn children as a disease to be prevented, would result in the dehumanization of the species.

With rampant promiscuity and wholesale divorce, the explosion of pornography and the mainstreaming of the *Playboy* philosophy, taxpayer funding of abortion, and a day in America when we can read about teenage girls throwing newborn infants into dumpsters and leaving them out in the snow, the world [Pope] Paul VI predicted is upon us. Indeed, the new world takes on the aspect of the old world of pagan Rome, where unwanted babies were left on hillsides to die of exposure. Life is no longer respected as it was by the Greatest Generation, which came home after seeing how life had been so disrespected in a world at war. As the pope predicted, the beneficiaries of contraception and abortion have turned out to be selfish men who use women and toss them away like Kleenex.

Nowhere is the overthrow of the old moral order more evident than in how homosexuality is seen today, and yesterday. In World War II, Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, who wore the "old school tie" of FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 32nd president of the US], was forced out of office for propositioning a sleeping car

porter. LBJ [Lyndon Baines Johnson, 36th president of the US] feared that the arrest of aide Walter Jenkins, caught in a police sting in a men's room at the YMCA, might cost him millions of votes. Rising GOP [Grand Old Party in reference to the Republican Party] star Bob Bauman lost his House seat when caught soliciting teenagers in the tenderloin district of DC. That was then; now is now.

The turning point came when Gerry Studds, who seduced a sixteen-year-old page, defied House sanctions and was reelected in Massachusetts, a Catholic state. Barney Frank easily survived House chastisement for fixing parking tickets for a live-in male lover who was running a full-service whorehouse out of Barney's basement, and, in the Clinton era, he began to bring his boyfriend to White House socials. In 2001, John Ashcroft was lacerated during his confirmation hearings by former Senate colleagues for having opposed the nomination of homosexual James Hormel as [American] ambassador to Luxembourg. Hormel, broadcasting the San Francisco gay pride parade, had laughingly welcomed the transvestite "Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence," who mock the pope and Catholic nuns. Truly, the world is turned upside down.

When America's most public lesbian couple, actresses Anne Heche and Ellen DeGeneres, broke up, the president of the United States called to offer his sympathy. Hillary Clinton became the first First Lady to march in the New York City gay pride parade. Did the *New York Times*, the good Gray Lady of Forty-third Street, editorially question the wisdom of America's First Lady parading with drag queens and men in thongs? Not at all. As *Times* national political correspondent Richard Berke told colleagues at the tenth-anniversary reception of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association, "Three quarters of the people who decide what goes on the front page [of the *Times*] are 'not-so-closeted' homosexuals."

Nine months after marching for gay pride, Mrs. Clinton refused to march in the 240th St. Patrick's Day parade, once a must for all New York City politicians. The Ancient Order of Hibernians, the fraternal Roman Catholic group that runs the parade, does not permit the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization to march as a unit; and Mrs. Clinton had been chastised by gay rights groups for marching on St. Patrick's Day in 2000. That Senator Clinton would appease the homosexuals, even if it meant affronting Irish Catholics, testifies to the new balance of power in the Democratic Party and the new correlation of forces in the culture war...

Even the children of Middle America now do tours of duty in the sexual revolution. "Do your own thing!" is now a moral norm. Every American woman of childbearing age has had abortion as a fallback, and millions will not give it up. They want it there for themselves and their daughters and will vote against any politician or party that threatens to take it away.

Euthanasia has come to Europe and is coming to America. Upon what moral ground do we any longer stand to stop it? Dr. Kevorkian, a ghoul in an earlier age, some of whose victims were just depressed, not dying, gets a sympathetic profile on *Sixty Minutes*. In the Age of the Individual, people believe in this life, not the next; in the quality of life, not the sanctity of life; and no one wants to be told how he should live his life. "Americans are not going to lead 21st-century lives based on 18th- and 19th-century moral ideals," writes sociologist and public intellectual Alan Wolfe, "Any form of higher authority has to tailor its demands to the needs of real people." After a millennium and a half, paganism is the "comeback kid."⁷⁷

What [these materialist and secular societies] are attempting is truly audacious. Like Lucifer and Adam, the

[Euro-American] man has decided he can disobey God without consequence and become his own God. In casting off [scripture], Western man is saying, “Through medical and biological science, we have learned how to prevent life, how to prolong life, how to create life, how to clone life. Through our military technology, we know how to win wars now without losing a single soldier. Through our understanding of monetary and fiscal policy, we know how to prevent depressions. Soon we will know how to prevent recessions. Our global economy promises prosperity for all through free markets and free trade. Global democracy will bring us world peace, and we have in place the institutions of a world government. Time and goodwill will take us there. God was a good flight instructor, but now we no longer need Him. We will take over from here.”

The [de-scripturalization] of America is [an error of historical proportions], with [its] civilization as the stakes. America has thrown overboard the moral compass by which the republic steered for two hundred years, and now it sails by dead reckoning. Reason alone, without Revelation, sets the course. The Founding Fathers warned that this was a bridge too far. No country could remain free unless virtuous, they said, and virtue could not exist in the absence of faith. Do not “indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion,” said [President] Washington in his Farewell Address. “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.” John Adams agreed, “Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” Consider what has happened to [American] society with the overthrow of the old moral order.

- One in four children born to white women are out of wedlock. In 1960, it was 2 percent. Three in four

unmarried white women have had affairs by age nineteen. In 1900, the figure was 6 percent. Teenage suicides are triple what they were in the early-1960s. The test scores of high school students are now among the lowest of the industrialized nations.

- Abortions in the United States now run at 1.2–1.4 million per year, the highest rate in the West, with 40 million performed since *Roe v. Wade*.⁷⁸ Births to married women in the United States, 4 million in 1960, fell to 2.7 million in 1996.
- The US divorce rate is up 350 percent since 1962, and one-third of all American children now live in single-parent homes.
- Nearly 2 million Americans are in jails or prison, 4.5 million on probation or parole. In 1980, the prison and jail population was 500,000.
- There are six million narcotics addicts in the US.
- In the African-American community, 69 percent of all births are out of wedlock, two-thirds of the children live in single-parent homes, and 28.5 percent of the boys can expect to serve a jail or prison sentence. In major cities four in ten black males aged sixteen to thirty-five are in jail or prison, or are on probation or parole. Drugs are pandemic. Children do not learn in schools. Conscientious kids are intimidated and beaten up. Girls are molested and assaulted by gang members high on dope and rap.

These are the statistics of a decadent society and dying civilization, the first fruits of the cultural revolution that is [de-scripturalizing] America. Reading these statistics, one is reminded of Whittaker Chambers in *Witness*, “History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations that have become indifferent to God, and died.” [There have been men of vision who could detect social laws even when they are absent from its formulation in the Qur’an.

Take Jim Nelson Black who could be just as well commenting on this Qur'anic lesson when he says],

No matter how far back you look, you will find that religion was always foundational to the great societies. Whether in India, China, Palestine, Greece, Carthage, Africa, or the civilizations of South and Central America, the story is always the same: civilization arises from religion, and when the traditional religious beliefs of a nation are eroded, the nation dies.

Europe has begun to resemble the US. Between 1960 and 2000, out-of-wedlock births soared in Canada from 4 percent to 31 percent, in the UK from 5 percent to 38 percent, in France from 6 percent to 36 percent.

As a guide to people's moral lives in Britain, Christianity has been "vanquished," Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, the archbishop of Westminster, told a gathering of priests in September 2001. People now seek happiness in alcohol, drugs, pornography, and recreational sex, said the cardinal in echo of the archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, who had observed, a year earlier, "A tacit atheism prevails. Death is assumed to be the end of life. Our concentration on the here and now renders a thought of eternity irrelevant."⁷⁹

Clearing Up the Fiction about Angels

The Qur'an takes man by the hand and shows him the nature of such stubborn attitudes. Human beings can be very offensive. And they have a tendency to revive their own mistakes of the past and commit the same historical errors over and over again, having never learned. There are human types who, when presented with a mountain of truth, refuse to see it. Shame no longer appears to be a component of their character. The Qur'an personifies this

complex psychological orientation that is often accompanied by ideological underpinnings,

But even if We had sent down to you [O Prophet] a writing on paper, and they had touched it with their own hands, those who are bent on denying Allah's power would indeed have said, "This is clearly nothing but a deception!" (6:7).

These contrarian *kāfirs* do not turn down Allah's (ﷻ) words because they lack the evidence of its validity; they do not object to Him because what He is saying is ambiguous or ill-defined. The fact of the matter is that they reject God because they are presumptuous and domineering. Preferring not to consider for one moment what God is saying, even if He wanted to bring them these words, not via the medium of revelation to a prophet, which does not fit into their immediate material appraisal of things, they still would not affirm its truth and commit to its meanings. If He were to present them with a heavenly written scripture they could see and feel with their own eyes and hands, that is, without a prophet "middle-man," they would nonetheless deny Him and rebuff the scripture given to them. Such people have always substantiated their rejection with the words, **"This is clearly nothing but manifest magic."** The human objection to God is composed of this kind of mental and emotional rancidity toward doing what is right and proper.

This should be a lesson for some committed Muslims who have a hard time giving up on certain people. These Muslims have to realize that there are some people who will never listen, never respond, and never become Muslims. The Muslims can ill afford to spend time with the few people who are described by this *āyah*, especially when there are many other people who are inclined to reason and disposed to listen.

The *āyāt* describe another kind of antagonist, one who thinks that Allah (ﷻ) should have an angel accompany the Prophet (ﷺ) in his everyday mission of communicating and implementing Islam,

They are saying, too, “Why has not an angel [visibly] been sent down unto him?” But had We sent down an angel, all would indeed have been decided, and they would have been allowed no further respite [for repentance]. And [even] if We had appointed an angel as Our message-bearer, We would certainly have made him [appear as] a man — and thus We would only have confused them in the same way as they are now confusing themselves (6:8–9).

According to their reasoning, this angel could serve to confirm that the Prophet (ﷺ) is genuine and is working on instructions from God. The Qur’an exposes the ignorance of the people with such suggestions as they do not know what angels do and what functions they perform. It is an expression of Allah’s (ﷻ) mercy that He does not respond to such selfish and illiterate requests. What transpired with Muhammad (ﷺ) at the hands of the Arabian *mushriks* was only a repeat performance of what happened to previous prophets as they engaged their own people. These disputants, all of whom share the same set of characteristics, are described herein in their Arabian version.

First, these Arabian objectors were not contesting Allah’s (ﷻ) being or existence. Rather they wanted proof that the Prophet (ﷺ) was in fact sent by Allah, and that the Qur’an itself is a book revealed by Him. For this reason, they came up with a specific method of proof: to have Allah (ﷻ) send down an angel who will accompany Muhammad (ﷺ) and confirm his every step. This was just one suggestion in a sequence of “negotiations” (what they thought they were doing). Reading through this Book of record, one comes across the other proposals they offered up. A case in point is the discourse in *Sūrah Banī Isrā’il* (*al-Isrā’*) that captures their state of protestation and expostulation, their pathetic recommendations for proving that Muhammad (ﷺ) is a prophet and that the Qur’an is a scripture,

For, indeed, many facets have We given in this Qur'an to every kind of lesson [designed] for [the benefit of] mankind! However, most men are unwilling to accept anything but blasphemy, and so they say, "[O Muhammad], we shall not believe you until you cause a spring to gush forth for us from the earth, or you have a garden of date-palms and vines and cause rivers to gush forth in their midst in a sudden rush, or you cause the skies to fall down upon us in smithereens, as you have threatened, or [until] you bring Allah and the angels face to face before us, or you have a house [made] of gold, or you ascend to heaven — but no, we would not [even] believe in your ascension unless you bring down to us [from heaven] a writing that we [ourselves] could read!"

Say you, [O Prophet], "Limitless in His glory is my Sustainer! Am I, then, anything but a mortal man, an apostle?" Yet whenever [Allah's] guidance came to them [through a prophet], nothing has ever kept people from believing [in him] save this their objection, "Would Allah have sent a [mere] mortal man as His apostle?" Say, "If angels were walking about on earth as their natural abode, We would indeed have sent down unto them an angel out of heaven as Our apostle." (17:89–95).

This type of talk demonstrates the stubbornness and ignorance of these types of people. Had they just been common-sense people they could have discovered the truth through the irreproachable character of Muhammad (ﷺ), whose honesty, honor, and trustworthiness were already well known to them. They themselves were the ones who called him *al-amin* (the tried and true judicious one). In Makkah, even at the height of their disagreement with Muhammad (ﷺ), they were the ones who had deposited their valuables with him for safekeeping. As if to make the poignancy of this event even more ironic, when the Prophet (ﷺ) was forced to leave

Makkah, as he sought political asylum and social protection in Madinah, he told his cousin ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib to return those items to their owners. Imagine! On the day these Arabian *mushriks* were working out the details of how to kill him, they still had their merchandise in his care and possession.

The truth and honesty of Muhammad (ﷺ) was obviously beyond doubt, and they knew it. When he first publicly called them to a meeting at al-Ṣafā, as he was ordered to do by Allah (ﷻ), he asked them if they would believe him were he to break some news to them. They all, without any exception, replied that they had always known him to be truthful and factual. If they were looking for quality of character they certainly had enough experience coming from his time-tested association with them. The point here is that these *kāfirs* knew Muhammad (ﷺ) was telling the truth, but their prejudice and vested interests distracted them from this realization.

Furthermore, had they resolved to do so, these cunning *kāfirs* could have found proof in the Qur’an that superseded their petitions for physical and material miracles. This Qur’an is proof positive in and of itself. If they would have just applied their objective minds, they could have easily sensed the divine evidence of this Qur’an in its linguistic structure — language being their forte — as well as in its informational content. Would they have had any real problem if they had accepted the fact that the Qur’an has to have come from Allah (ﷻ) because of its superb structure and content? Besides, since they had already acknowledged Allah (ﷻ) as Creator, accepting Him as Authority would have been the next logical step. Their linguistic prowess told them the Qur’an was something above the human and the worldly; in fact, anyone who is communicative in Arabic knows the Qur’an is by far above anything human and mortal. Therefore, only those who obstinately refuse to mend their ways — those who are hardened against good or moral influence, who are stubbornly prejudiced, and who object to accepting better social attitudes — will judge by their bias instead of by their brains. Some of these *mushriks* had a sense that the Qur’an was unique, outstanding, and magnificent. But still they could not bring themselves to carry its responsibilities and duties.

Thus, it appears that they were not really looking for proof as much as they were after the ways and means to justify their intractability and recalcitrance. Their disingenuous solicitation of proof may also have been a “delaying tactic,” which they were using as an excuse to delay the day of reckoning. But, in the end, only the aperceptive words of Allah (ﷻ) live on,

And if We were to bring down to you [Muhammad] a written book that they could feel with their [own] hands, those who are *kāfirs* would say, “But this is outright illusion” (6:7).

Moreover, as these Arabians were familiar with the word *angel*, they wanted Allah (ﷻ) to send an angel to attach to Muhammad (ﷺ) in whatever he does — as a way of verifying his authenticity and resourcefulness. But they did not know the nature or function of the angels they were pressing for; it is only Allah (ﷻ) who knows. These Arabians were deluded about the angels; they did not know the relationship of angels with Allah (ﷻ), or the relationship of these angels with mortal beings and worldly life. The Qur’an recounts many of their superstitions and nonsense about angels, following this up with correct information and accurate knowledge — for those who are not too arrogant to listen and learn, of course. Thus, the Qur’an was meant to flow through the mind and emotions leaving its corrective effect, to run through heart and conscience leaving its inspiring reverberation, and to stream through conditions and circumstances setting them aright.

The Qur’an narrates how these Arabians who were asking for angels to “back up” the Prophet (ﷺ) were the same ones who, in their ignorance and ingeniousness, thought that the angels were Allah’s (ﷻ) daughters. And so, continuing with this line of thought, they felt these angels had an indisputable *shafā’ah* (intercession) with Allah (ﷻ). For this reason, some of the idols in and around the Ka’bah were meant to be icons of these angels. This Arabian superstitious misinformation about angels was set to rest by Allah’s (ﷻ) words in *Sūrah al-Najm*,

Have you, then, ever considered [what you are worshipping in] al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzá, as well as [in] Manāḥ, the third and last [of this triad]? Why — for yourselves [you would choose only] male offspring, whereas to Him [you assign] female: that, lo and behold, is an unfair division! These [allegedly divine beings] are nothing but empty names you have invented — you and your forefathers — [and] for which Allah has bestowed no warrant from on high. They [who worship them] follow nothing but surmise and their own wishful thinking — although right guidance has now indeed come to them from their Sustainer.

Does man imagine that it is his due to have all that he might wish for, despite the fact that [both] the life to come and this present [one] belong to Allah [alone]? For, however many angels there be in the heavens, their intercession can be of no avail [to anyone] — except after Allah has given leave [to intercede] for whomever He wills and with whom He is well-pleased. Behold, it is [only] such as do not [really] have faith [conviction] in the life to come that regard the angels as female beings; and [since] they have no knowledge whatever thereof, they follow nothing but surmise: yet, behold, never can surmise take the place of truth (53:19–28).

The Arabians ridiculing Muhammad (ﷺ) were corrected yet again in this *sūrah* as to their perception of angels when Allah (ﷻ) tells them in response to their ill-conceived suggestion,

They are saying, too, “Why has not an angel [visibly] been sent down unto him?” But had We sent down an angel, all would indeed have been decided, and they would have been allowed no further respite [for repentance] (6:8).

Ignorant of the way things work, these Arabian deniers wanted Allah to send down to earth an angel. But the natural and social laws of Allah (ﷻ) only call angels into human societies to punish them for their practical and systemic opposition to Him. Thus these angels transfer the will of destruction into the realm of the natural and social laws within which human society functions. And had Allah (ﷻ) responded to these Arabian *mushriks* by sending an angel, the angel would have sealed their fate by obliterating their contrarian society. Consequently these Arabians would have run out of time to reconsider and repent. So is this what they really wanted? Had they been more attentive to the Prophet's (ﷺ) counsel, they would have been thankful that Allah (ﷻ) did not respond to them, because the fulfillment of their wish would have necessitated their demise. This is how merciful Allah (ﷻ) is — even toward His unenlightened and undereducated subjects. They had not a clue about how Allah's (ﷻ) social laws work; living as they were, in a state of ignorance, they did not perceive how close they were to disintegration and liquidation. But still, despite the latitude Allah (ﷻ) was giving them, they refused to be guided; instead they arrogantly turned down His mercy, and to compound their intransigence, they made demands.

The next *āyah* sheds further light on this “angel to world” transformation request that was being made by unlettered and unschooled people,

And [even] if We had appointed an angel as Our message-bearer, We would certainly have made him [appear as] a man — and thus We would only have confused them in the same way as they are now confusing themselves (6:9).

These primitive Arabians were suggesting that Allah (ﷻ) send an angel to demonstrate the truth of Muhammad (ﷺ). But angels are another form of creation, different in their sphere of life from man's animated habitat. The nature of angels is known in its entirety only to Allah. These angels as described by Allah — and man has no re-

liable information about angels except what comes from Allah (ﷻ) — are not able to walk on earth while maintaining their original anatomy and “physique.” That is because they are not of this planet, they were not born into the physical specifications and material requirements that are specific to human beings. But they may appear in the form of humans if they have a task to perform in the realm of humans. This they do when they communicate with Prophets (ﷺ) or when they are tasked with the responsibility of devastating a social habitat, one that has reached its “destructive maturity,” thus incurring the decree of destruction by Allah (ﷻ). Angels may also appear in human life when they are involved in reinforcing and supporting committed Muslims, as at the war-fronts and in the battlefields. And throughout the Qur’anic journey, there are instances of other duties and functions they perform in human life. Lastly, angels do not disobey Allah (ﷻ) in whatever He demands and they do what they are told.

So if Allah (ﷻ) would have responded to their request by sending an angel to earth, this angel would have appeared in the form of a human being, and not in an angelic composition. Here, once again, these same doubting Arabians would be back to square one — confused and bewildered. Hence, if they were amazed and baffled at Muhammad (ﷺ), whom they knew very well and were familiar with, being Allah’s Messenger and Prophet, then how would they react to an angel in the constitution of a man, whom they did not know, coming and telling them, “I am an angel sent by Allah (ﷻ) to affirm and back up Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ)”? Such an argument would not have led them in any kind of positive direction. The fact expressed by Muhammad (ﷺ), which they refused to accept, would have been the same as the fact expressed by an angel-cum-man, and hence they would have rejected it as well. In the final analysis, they ended up being what they truly were: deniers of Allah (ﷻ).

Finally, insofar as the dimension of angels is concerned, this is a fact the Muslims learn from Allah (ﷻ), His Prophet (ﷺ), and the masterful Qur’an. The Islamic commitment to Allah (ﷻ), the Muslims’ bearing His covenant, and their confidence in Him

require that they affirm Allah (ﷻ), His angels, His Messengers (ﷺ), the Final Day, and His *qadar* (predetermination), regardless of whether it appears to them in their immediate calculation to be good or bad.

Affirming the *ghayb* by human beings represents a paradigm shift in life. In doing so man steps out of the confinements of materialism and admits to a world, existence, and reality beyond what is perceptible to his senses. Man makes a significant move from his biological being into his divinity-related being. Excluding man from access to this “divine dimension” is a serious step backward for life itself. Many materialistic dialectics and secular trends have tried to do just that, closing the door to all who seek an understanding or an affiliation with this divine *ghayb*. Later in this *sūrah*, there is an *āyah* about this subject, **“And He has the keys to the *ghayb*; no one knows it but Him...” (6:59).**

At this point, it would be instructive to consider what previous scripture says about who the angels are. In the Jewish understanding of the word, an angel is a *malak(h)*, current Hebrew for *messenger*. The word is now used for numerous types of supernatural beings mentioned in the scriptures (cherubim, seraphim, heavenly host, etc.), but the Bible does not suggest any kinship between these classes, at least in the period prior to the Babylonian exile. Accordingly, only the angels (*malakhim*) appear in human form; as emissaries they convey God’s words to mortals — such as Abraham, Jacob (ﷺ), etc. — and even perform practical missions (preceding the Israelis in the Exodus, smiting Sennacherib’s army, etc.). The angels reside in heaven (according to Jacob’s (ﷺ) dream); in their human guise they are not always recognized by mortals. Reverence is due to angels only as the envoys of God. Although their super-human character often inspires awe (Isaiah, 6; Ezekiel, 1), this attitude does not extend to individual angels.⁸⁰

Until the Second Temple period, no angel had a personal name, though he may sometimes exercise a permanent function (“The Angel which redeemed me from all evil,” Genesis, 48:16). Names, including Gabriel and Michael, are first mentioned in the Book of Daniel, and then proliferated in the Hellenistic period

when they included a group, sometimes listed as consisting of seven or four, of whom the best known are Gabriel, Michael, Uriel, and Raphael — the ones permanently close to God (archangels). The differentiation between the various categories gradually disappeared.⁸¹

The importance of angelology grew under foreign influence. The heavenly host was now arranged into divisions (for example, 1 Enoch, 61), but without uniformity or system.⁸² Occasionally, the stars appear as angels, while natural phenomena, such as clouds and hail, were presided over by angels. Each of the 70 nations of the world had its own angel who protected it. Other angels conveyed human prayers to God, serving as mediators between man and the transcendental Divinity. Despite their participation in mundane affairs, there is no trace of any cult of angels. A special group was the fallen angels, the sons of God who had taken the daughters of men (Genesis, 6:2); they taught mankind evil ways but were eventually punished.⁸³

In midrashic and talmudic literature, all previous trends are recorded and new ones added. The characteristics of the angels are partly human (they speak Hebrew) and partly superhuman. They participate in the important events of human life including, but not limited to, pregnancy, birth, etc. God consults his household, that is, the angels, on every subject. Nevertheless, the righteous man may attain angelic rank and rise even higher. Medieval philosophers do not reject the reality of angels but interpret their nature in harmony with their general opinions, often identifying them with the Higher Intelligences of Aristotle. The Kabbalah greatly extended the theory of angels, the number of personal names increasing vastly; each man has an angel of luck who decides his fate. In the Jewish liturgy, the praise of God by the ministering angels (based on Isaiah, 6:1–3 and Ezekiel, 3:12) is incorporated in the *Kedushah*, *Piyyutim*, and *Selihot* while a popular hymn, *Shalom Aleikhem*, greets the ministering angels on the Sabbath eve. This represents a rough understanding of angels in Judaism.⁸⁴

In Christianity, *angel* means *messenger*, and the designation is applied to those pure spirits without a body that are created by God, that have a superior nature than man, and that minister for

Him. Like man they have understanding and free will, but they are considered immortal. They are divided into nine choirs, which, starting from the lowest, are angels, archangels, virtues, powers, principalities, dominations, thrones, cherubim, and seraphim. The seven holy angels in this Christian interpretation are Abdiel, Gabriel, Michael, Raguel, Raphael, Simiel, and Uriel. Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael are mentioned in the Bible.⁸⁵ From what can be determined with this “scriptural” information coming from the Judeo-Christian context, there is some truth mixed with much falsehood about the nature of angels.

Islamic sources, the Qur’an in particular, deliver a picture with far more clarity. Angels are a creation of Allah (ﷻ). Their relationship with Him is one of *‘ubūdiyyah* (divine service and religious service), and hence, they exemplify total and unqualified obedience to Him. Though they are “close” to Allah (ﷻ), this closeness cannot be quantified, and its quality cannot be defined in the way human beings understand their own closeness to the Divine,

...and those who are with Him are never too proud to conform to Him and never grow weary [thereof]: they extol His limitless glory by night and by day, never flagging [therein] (21:19–20);

And [yet], they say, “The Most Gracious has taken unto Himself a son”! Limitless is He in His glory! No, [those whom they regard as God’s “offspring” are but His] honored servants: they speak not until He has spoken to them, and [whenever they act], they act at His behest. He knows all that lies open before them and all that is hidden from them: hence, they cannot intercede for any but those whom He has [already] graced with His goodly acceptance, since they themselves stand in reverent awe of Him (21:26–28).

Angels carry the Merciful’s throne; and on the Day of Judgment they will constellate around Him. As to “how” this will hap-

pen, not enough details “tailored to human understanding” have been provided. This is what Allah (ﷻ) has told man about the *ghayb* and he can go no further in extending his knowledge beyond what has been divinely revealed,

And you will see the angels surrounding the throne of [His] almightiness, extolling their Sustainer’s glory and praise. And judgement will have been passed in justice on all [who had lived and died], and the word will be spoken, “All praise is due to Allah, the Sustainer of all the worlds!” (39:75);

They who bear the throne of [His] almightiness, as well as all who are near it, extol their Sustainer’s limitless glory and praise, and commit to Him... (40:7).

Angels are the keepers of Paradise and the wardens of the Fire. They receive the folks who have been admitted to Paradise with greetings of peace and invocations, as they also take in the folks of the inferno with reprehension and rebuke,

And those who were bent on denying the truth [of Allah’s worldly power] will be urged on in throngs toward Hell until, when they reach it, its gates will be opened, and its keepers will ask them, “Have there not come to you apostles from among yourselves, who conveyed to you your Sustainer’s *āyāt* and warned you of the coming of this your Day [of Judgement]?” They will answer, “Yes, indeed!” But the sentence of suffering will [already] have fallen due upon the deniers of the truth; [and] they will be told, “Enter the gates of Hell, therein to abide!” And how vile an abode for those who were given to false pride!

But those who were conscious of their Sustainer [His worldly power] will be urged on in throngs toward Paradise until, when they reach it, they shall find its

gates wide open; and its keepers will say to them, “Peace be upon you! Well have you done: enter, then, this [Paradise], herein to abide!” And they will exclaim, “All praise is due to Allah, who has made His promise to us come true, and has bestowed upon us this expanse [of bliss] as our portion, so that we may dwell in Paradise as we please!” And how excellent a reward will it be for those who labored [in His way]! (39:71–74);

For We have caused none but angelic powers to lord over the fire [of Hell] (74:31).

Angels interact with earthly humans in different ways, one of which is their role as conservators and archivists of the human condition. They keep a written record of all human action; and once any human has reached his final day on earth, the angels trigger the moment of death,

And He alone holds sway over His servants. And He sends forth heavenly forces [angels] to watch over you until, when death approaches any of you, Our [angelic] messengers cause him to die: and they do not overlook [anyone] (6:61);

It is all alike [to Him] whether any of you conceals his thought or brings it into the open, and whether he seeks to hide [his evil deeds] under the cover of night or walks [boldly] in the light of day, [thinking that] he has hosts of helpers [angels] — both such as can be perceived by him and such as are hidden from him — who could preserve him from whatever Allah may have willed (13:10–11);

Not even a word can he [man] utter but there is an [angelic] watcher with him, ever-present (50:18).

Angels are tasked with communicating revelation to Allah's Prophets (ﷺ). Allah (ﷻ) says that it is Gabriel (ﷺ) himself who is assigned this particular responsibility,

Say [O Prophet], “Whosoever is an enemy of Gabriel” — who, verily, by Allah's leave, has brought down upon your heart this [divine Writ] that confirms the truth of whatever there still remains [of earlier revelations], and is a guidance and a glad tiding for the committed Muslims (2:97);

He causes the angels to descend with this divine inspiration, [bestowed] at His behest upon whomever He wills of His servants, “Warn [all human beings] that there is no deity save Me: be, therefore, conscious of Me!” (16:2);

Allah (ﷻ) describes Jibrīl (Gabriel) as having energy, and that the Prophet (ﷺ) saw him in his angelic feature twice, although on all the other occasions of his transmitting revelation to the Prophet, Gabriel (ﷺ) appeared in non-angelic features,

Consider this disclosure [of Allah's message] as it comes down from on high. This fellow-man of yours has not gone astray, nor is he deluded, and neither does he speak out of his own desire: that [which he conveys to you] is but [a divine] inspiration with which he is being inspired — something that a very mighty one [Gabriel] has imparted to him, [an angel] endowed with surpassing energy/power, who in time manifested himself in his true shape and nature, appearing in the horizon's loftiest part, and then drew near, and came close, until he was but two bow-lengths away, or even nearer.

And thus did [Allah] reveal unto His servant whatever He deemed right to reveal. The [servant's] heart did not give the lie to what he saw: will you,

then, contend with him as to what he saw? And, indeed, he saw him [the angel] a second time by the lote-tree of the farthest limit, near unto the garden of promise, with the lote-tree veiled in a veil of nameless splendor. [And withal], the eye did not waver, nor yet did it stray: truly did he see some of the most profound of his Sustainer's symbols (53:1–18);

Angels descend upon committed Muslims at times of duress and offer them support and stability as they struggle to wage war against obnoxious and abusive concentrated power (*tāghūt*),

[And remember] when you did say to the committed Muslims, “Is it not enough for you [to know] that your Sustainer will aid you with three thousand angels sent down [from on high]? No, but if you are patient in adversity and conscious of Him [and His power presence], and the enemy should fall upon you all of a sudden, your Sustainer will aid you with five thousand angels swooping down!” And Allah ordained this [to be said by His Apostle] only as a glad tiding for you, and that your hearts should thereby be set at rest — since no support can come from any save Allah, the Almighty, the Truly Wise... (3:124–126);

Lo! Your Sustainer inspired the angels [to convey this His message to the committed Muslims], “I am with you!” [And He commanded the angels], “And give firmness to those who have attained *īmān* [with these words from Me], ‘I shall cast terror into the hearts of those who are bent on denying the truth [of My power presence]; strike, then, their necks, [O committed Muslims], and strike off every one of their fingertips!’” (8:12);

[But], behold, as for those who say, “Our Sustainer is Allah,” and then steadfastly pursue the right way —

upon them do angels often descend, [saying], “Fear not and grieve not, but receive the glad tidings of that Paradise, which has been promised to you! (41:30).

Angels are preoccupied with the affairs of Muslims who commit themselves to Allah (ﷻ), and while praising Him, they ask Him to forgive the latter’s sins and errors. They petition Allah (ﷻ) for the well-being and acceptance of the committed Muslims as if they were loved ones,

They who carry the throne of [Allah’s] almightiness, as well as all who are near it, extol their Sustainer’s limitless glory and praise, and securely commit to Him, and ask forgiveness for all [others] who are committed [to Allah], “O our Sustainer! You embrace all things within [Your] grace and knowledge: forgive, then, their sins unto those who repent and follow Your path, and preserve them from suffering through the blazing Fire!

“And our Sustainer, bring them into the gardens of perpetual bliss that You have promised them, together with the righteous from among their forebears, and their spouses, and their offspring — for, verily, You alone are the Almighty, the Truly Wise — and preserve them from [doing] evil deeds, for anyone whom on that Day [of Judgement] You will have preserved from [the taint of] evil deeds, him will You have graced with Your mercy: and that, that will be the triumph supreme!” (40:7–9).

Angels communicate the good news of achieving paradise to those who have earned it at the moment of death. They receive them with rejoicing in the following world/life, and send greetings to them in Paradise,

...gardens of perpetual bliss, which they shall enter together with the righteous from among their parents,

their spouses, and their offspring: and the angels will come to them from every gate [and will say], “Peace be upon you, because you have persevered!” How excellent, then, this fulfillment in the hereafter! (13:23–24).

Those whom the angels gather in death while they are in a state of inner purity, greeting them thus, “Peace be upon you! Enter Paradise by virtue of what you were doing [in life]!” (16:32);

As mentioned above, those who find themselves at the entrances of Hell will be ushered in by criticizing and reprimanding angels. Angels also confront these unredeemed people in the battles for truth in worldly life. And once these evil souls approach the instant of death the angels are ready for them with all preparations of disquiet, indignity, and chastisement,

If you could but see [how it will be] when these evil-doers find themselves in the agonies of death, and the angels stretch forth their hands [and call], “Give up your souls! Today you shall be requited with the suffering of humiliation for having attributed to Allah something that is not true, and for having persistently scorned His messages in your arrogance!” (6:93);

And if you could but see [how it will be] when He causes those who are bent on denying the truth to die: the angels will strike their faces and their backs, and [will say], “Taste suffering through fire in return for what your own hands have crafted, for never does Allah do the least wrong to His creatures!” (8:50).

Angels have been involved with man ever since the creation of intelligent life, that is, since Adam (ﷺ). They continued to play their assigned role throughout human history and development, as the Qur’an indicates. The position of angels concerning the genesis

of human life appears several times in this proper Qur’an. Some of it has already been covered in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*,

And lo! Your Sustainer said to the angels, “Behold, I am about to render on earth a successor.” They said, “Will You place on it such as will spread corruption thereon and shed blood — whereas it is we who extol Your limitless glory, and praise You, and hallow Your name?” [Allah] answered, “Verily, I know that which you do not know.”

And He imparted unto Adam the names of all things; then He exhibited them to the angels and said, “Declare unto Me the names of these [things], if what you say is true.” They replied, “Limitless are You in Your glory! No knowledge have we save that which You have imparted unto us. Verily, You alone are the All-Knowing, the Truly Wise.”

Said He, “O Adam, convey to them the names of these [things].” And as soon as [Adam] had conveyed to them their names, [Allah] said, “Did I not say unto you, verily, I alone know the hidden reality of the heavens and the earth, and know all that you bring into the open and all that you would conceal?” And when We told the angels, “Prostrate yourselves before Adam!” they all prostrated themselves, except Iblīs, who refused and gloried in his arrogance, and thus he became one of those who deny the truth (2:30–34).

This realm of the *ghayb* offers man the widest expanse, the greatest magnitude, and the most extensive scope of existence and reality. Without this knowledge and affirmation of the *ghayb*, human beings become similar to animals, as the latter are disposed to instinct and confined to the limited world of matter. Those people and institutions who try to convince the God-centered to disclaim this *ghayb* want them to live like beasts and brutes. To the contrary, and to equip him with what he needs to reach his

potential, Allah (ﷻ) has dignified man with this precious information that extends his mind, his thoughts, and his emotions beyond that of savages.

Some primitive people, the Arabians of pre-Qur’anic times included, are ahead of today’s materialistic modernists who take pride in a (social) science that is fashioned to emasculate the human spirit into a materialistic worldview full of neuroses, depression, social crises, and a host of other problems, foreseen and unforeseen. These self-styled modernists look upon people who carry the covenant, have faith in Allah (ﷻ), and are aware of a world and an existence beyond the sensual one as being simplistic, reactionary, or even dumb.

There are people — some call them intellectuals or they think of themselves as such — who think that science has to have the final word on the subject of *ghayb* and angels. But no Muslim ought to be convinced of this, especially with the Qur’an in hand. Science is the discovery and investigation, the research and exploration of the world and things, times and places that are within the range and sphere of the human senses and mind. According to the New Oxford American Dictionary, science is “the intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment.”⁸⁶ This being the case, how can anyone make a logical assertion that science is the arbiter on matters and subjects that are beyond the scope of the physical and material arena.

Of a celestial spirit in a sense, angels serve Allah (ﷻ) in the various capacities outlined above, not the least of which is their serving as guardians of individuals or multitudes. Nothing from hard-core scientific information and knowledge, meaning “science” that does not trespass into the realm of philosophy, would dispute the existence and the functions of angels. If in traditional Christianity, angels are understood to have been created before the world, no amount of science or scientific knowledge in the “Christian” secular world can either prove or disprove this understanding. People or academicians who deify “science” make the terrible mistake of extrapolating the minuscule information they have about

this confined and closed world man lives in and then generalizing it to the larger domain of existence beyond the cosmological range of reality. The only true and reliable information about angels is what comes from the Creator of these beings. So if “Christian art” depicts angels with a human body and wings, then this type of understanding must be weighed against the incontrovertible and irrefutable words of the Qur’an to determine whether this imagery is right or wrong.

What can be understood from the only credible and reliable sources, the Qur’an and the Prophet (ﷺ), is that human beings, in their temporal and spatial coordinates and with whatever sensory capacities they have, are not able to perceive the angels or jinn, as the latter are in their own state of being — that is, the way and the form in which Allah (ﷻ) created them.⁸⁷ This can be ascertained from the *āyah* about Satan, **“Verily, he and his similitude can see you from where you do not see them! (7:27).”** This may not have as much to do with the nature of these non-human, created beings as with the human field of vision. Scientists may have glimpsed the nature of subatomic particles and witnessed the world of quasars and pulsars across the galaxies, but making visual sense of the everyday world, even the immediate vicinity, is still very much a mystery.

Investigators are only beginning to understand how the eye and brain work together to produce a seamless view of the world. Even when the human eyes seem still, they are never at rest for more than a fraction of a second. They move so fast — up to 100 times every second — that the bearer is not aware of the movement. So how is it possible to measure these movements, and what purpose do they serve? Researchers have recorded eye movements by fitting a mirrored contact lens to the eye. Parallel rays of light reflected from the lens onto a moving film register the slightest movement. This experiment revealed three separate types of involuntary eye movement: irregular, high-frequency tremors; saccades, or flicks, that occur about once a second to correct the alignment of the eye when it has drifted too far from the object it is fixing on; and slow, irregular drifts that occur between these saccades. All these movements are entirely automatic and independent

of the voluntary eye movements that occur consciously when one is reading, driving, or playing a sport.⁸⁸

Continuing experiments in this direction have shown that without these microsecond eye movements it would be impossible to see. Using special optical devices, medical scientists prevented the eye from moving at all, thus artificially stabilizing the contours of an image on relatively few nerve cells in the retina. This caused the image to fade and disappear after a few seconds. They concluded that the involuntary movements of the eye are necessary to allow light to fall on many different sets of cells in the retina. Otherwise, the eye cannot continue to generate a nerve signal for the brain to decipher as vision.⁸⁹

From what can be established through scripture, angels and jinn belong to a much more subtle and ethereal world than humans. Sometimes, philosophers have referred to this area of existence as the “metaphysical.” *Metaphysics* is a term that describes the analysis of the necessary causes and universal structures of being. The word, in Western philosophy, was originally connected to the 14 books of Aristotle “after the writings on physics,” that is, to those works that went beyond the investigation of the several aspects of the natural world to those permanent “first causes and principles” of being, such as God, the world, and the human soul.⁹⁰

Inquiry into the “first causes of being” linked metaphysics with “natural theology” and, until the Enlightenment, metaphysics was considered the natural ally of Christian theology. The philosophers David Hume (1711–1776) and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) challenged the “scientific” claims of metaphysics and sought to demonstrate that it went beyond the human analysis of existence, thus beyond experience, and therefore was unverifiable. For many philosophers today, metaphysics represents mere speculation, conjecture, or ideology. Also, since Kant, many Protestant theologians, for example, Kierkegaard, Ritschl, and Barth, have dissociated themselves from metaphysics and have appealed to biblical revelation as the only source of a true knowledge of God and man.⁹¹ Most Roman Catholic theologians and exponents of “process theology” argue that the Kantian critique is not compelling and that meta-

physics remains an important, even essential, foundation of Christian theology.⁹²

Muslims, however, understand that existence continues beyond the strictly material sphere of life. That is why in reference to angels and jinn, Muslims speak about ambrosial, ethereal, or translunar forms of life. These gentle bodies characterized by unusual lightness and delicacy are able to reformulate or reshape into physiques that are more dense. It appears these dainty and subtle beings have an edge over humans in that they are able, through some mechanism of their innate abilities, to assume the form of the latter; whereas man does not have the ability to reconstruct his form in the soma or frame of angels or jinn. Humans simply cannot transmute into more ethereal elements and stay alive. However, when a jinn or angel “shifts” shape into a human form, he becomes visible to the naked human eye, but his original shape is still not perceptible. Therefore, when Muhammad saw Jibrīl (ﷺ) in his innate shape and form, that sighting is considered a “miracle.”

There is a commonality between the superlative nature of Prophets and the exalted level of angels. This may explain, to some extent, why angels were in contact with Prophets (ﷺ) throughout the process of communicating Allah’s (ﷻ) revelations, as well as at other times. This is also true of the most refined subjects of Allah; these highly-developed individuals have an affinity of sorts with angels, that is, angels may be involved in their lives, as the *āyah* says, **“Lo! Your Sustainer inspired the angels to secure the committed Muslims [in warfare]...” (8:12)**. This angelic company may have the effect of influencing such gracious servants of Allah (ﷻ) with the knowledge of the truth and the hope for good fortune. It is well known that the angels passed on the good news to Maryam about the birth of ‘Īsā (ﷺ). It was Gabriel (ﷺ) who appeared to her when it was Allah’s (ﷻ) will to have her conceive by His *rūḥ*. A hadith refers to the cognitive influence of angels as it prompts man,

Satan has his pull over the son of Adam [humans] and the angel has its pull. Satan’s pull is the threat of evil and the

*denial of truth; the angel's pull is the confidence in [His] bounty and the affirmation of the truth. Whoever realizes this should know it is from Allah and thank Him. But whoever feels the former should seek Allah's refuge from Satan.*⁹³

Muslims Have Abdicated the Divine Mandate to Explore

At this point, the *āyāt* move to the consequences and the terrible outcome of those who protested the Prophets and aggravated the Apostles (ﷺ). This lesson has stood the test of time,

And, indeed, [even] before your time have apostles been derided, but those who scoffed at them were [in the end] overwhelmed by the very thing they were wont to deride. Say, "Go all over the earth, and behold what happened in the end to those who gave the lie to the truth!" (6:10–11).

Receiving this *āyah* as he did, the Prophet (ﷺ) must have felt relieved that he, too, was in the company of all the other prophets who preceded him; they had also been treated with contempt by their own people. Thus, he felt supported and buoyed by the company of Allah (ﷻ) who, when all things are said and done, would be the one to deal with adversaries, antagonists, and assailants. It is refreshing to hear Allah's (ﷻ) words telling him and the committed Muslims of all generations to come that they are not in this position alone. There were other prophets and men of God who were jeered and laughed at; they were belittled and humiliated. However, in the end, it was the opponents and the enemies of the prophets who were made to suffer the debilitating consequences. Truth always has its final word.

This *āyah* must also have had its impact on those Arabians who were demeaning and abasing Muhammad (ﷺ). They had but to look at their predecessors, who similarly stood in the way of prophets, to realize what end they were quickly moving toward. That they were going to be destroyed was only a matter of time if

they would persist in their all-out effort to find fault with and diminish the authority of Muhammad (ﷺ). These Arabian contemporaries of the Prophet were nothing compared to ancient societies and civilizations that are now the subject of chapters in history books.

“Say, ‘Go all over the earth, and behold what happened in the end to those who gave the lie to the truth!’” This *āyah*, which pertains to the rise and fall of empires and civilizations, breaks down all boundaries and eliminates all frontiers in the pursuit of the truth. Of the 25 “great civilizations” in world history, the most durable may have been that of Ancient Egypt. It existed in the Nile River Valley from circa 3400BCE–525CE — just short of four millennia. Two others, the Austronesian and the Inuit (Eskimo), lasted more than three millennia, but both of these were remote from the rest of mankind. Orthodox Christian civilization rose from the 1000-year-old Byzantine Empire (395–1453CE) in Anatolia around 680CE and then spread to the Dnieper Basin of Russia (circa 950CE). The Hindu empire on the Indian subcontinent, though never militarily imperialist, marked its first millennium in circa 1775CE and, with the ending of the British Raj of 1818–1947, revitalized itself well into its second.

Western civilization, which has its roots in ancient Greece and Rome, was virtually extinguished by the barbarian tribes of Central Europe in the 5th and 6th centuries CE; vestiges were left in insular Christian enclaves in Ireland; on Iona, Scotland; and at Lindisfarne, England. From these embers, fanned by traveling monks, it began to flourish once more from 675CE. No fewer than 10 major civilizations were lost to the Western world and discovered or rediscovered by Western “explorers” and archaeologists.⁹⁴

In the 16th century Spanish conquistadors (conquerors) found the Inca civilization of the Andes in 1532 and Portuguese colonizers of Africa reported the discovery of the Great Zimbabwe — 62 acres of ruins, once the capital of a great African civilization — in 1552. The Austronesian or Melanesian civilization, embracing also the far-flung Micronesians and Polynesians, became known to Europeans with the discovery of the Solomon Islands by Alvaro de Mendana de Neira in 1568. In 1502 Christopher Columbus (from

Genoa, Italy; lived from 1451–1506) first sighted a large seagoing cargo canoe crewed by Mayans, leading to the eventual discovery by Europeans of this Central American civilization.

French diplomat Ernest de Sarzac (1832–1901) uncovered the first evidence of the Sumerian civilization in 1877. Europe's earliest civilization (circa 2000–1380BCE) was found in Crete by the Englishman Arthur Evans (1851–1941) in 1896–1900. He named it Minoan after the legendary local king, Minos. The German Hugo Winckler found the first archaeological signs of the 20th–13th-century BCE Hittite capital, Hattusas (at Boghazkoy in Turkey) in 1906. The most recently discovered civilization is that of the Indus Valley, Pakistan. Excavation at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, its urban centers, began in 1922, but the discovery of the Indus civilization was not announced until 1924.

Where have all these societies and civilizations gone? Why do they not exist today, even as they were once so vibrant? Where can the answers to these questions be found? Allah (ﷻ) is the one who knows, **“Go all over the earth, and behold what happened in the end to those who were mendacious.”**

Muslims have fallen far short on this Qur'anic directive. There are no Muslims who are going to the far ends of the world to dig up the facts about other people's civilizational failures. The world has become the domain of non-Muslims who have gone to the four corners of the world on all types of missions and for mostly colonial objectives. Consider how others prosecuted the notion of “exploration” when Muslims themselves choose to be sedentary and not energetic as ordered here in this Qur'an.

One of the earliest documented explorers was Scylax of Caryanda. In 515BCE, Darius I (circa 558–486BCE), king of Persia (modern Iran), sent him to explore the Indus River Valley, the eastern frontier of Persia's extensive conquests. Scylax returned by sea some 2.5 years later and landed in the Isthmus of Heroonpolis (Suez). In the 2nd century BCE, Eudoxus of Cyzicus in Phrygia made the first known attempt to sail round Africa from the Mediterranean Sea. He had earlier made two voyages from the Red Sea to India for the ruler of Egypt. He then outfitted three ships in

present-day Cadiz in southern Spain and set out down the west coast of Africa but was never heard from again.⁹⁵

At the height of the Roman Empire, traders explored eastward in search of exotic goods. During the reign of the emperor Hadrian (ruled, 117–138CE), European merchants reached Thailand, Cambodia, Sumatra, and Java and may have turned north along the coast of China. Chinese records from 161CE indicate that Romans sent by Marcus Aurelius (ruled, 161–180CE) reached the emperor Hsiao-huan-ti. In the early-5th century, as the Roman Empire was besieged on all sides by the barbarian tribes of central Europe, European knowledge of the east was lost for centuries. The eastern trade was now the domain of Muslim seafarers, who became intimate with the entire eastern coast of Africa and the Indian Ocean.⁹⁶

On the Atlantic seaboard, Christian missionaries were the next explorers. Irish abbot St. Brendan (484–578CE) sailed to the Hebrides, Wales, and Brittany. The *Voyage of Brendan* (circa 1050CE) records an Atlantic voyage to islands that may have been what are now the Canaries or the Azores. At the same time the Vikings of Scandinavia were roaming the northern Atlantic in search of plunder. Iceland was first colonized by Vikings from Norway in 874CE and records have preserved the names of the island's first settlers: Ingolfr Amarnson and his wife, Hallveig Frodottir. In 985CE, Erik the Red (Eirik Thorvaldsson, circa 950–1010CE) of Norway was the first to record his travels through Greenland. The second of his three sons, Leif Eiriksson (circa 970–1010CE), is believed to have mapped the maritime locations of Helluland (Baffin Island), Markland (probably Labrador) and Vinland (Newfoundland) in circa 1001CE.⁹⁷

During the next centuries, Portugal provided the impetus for major European explorations (leading to colonization) under the aegis of Prince Henry the Navigator (1394–1460). Prince Henry was the third son of King Joao I and became governor of the Algarve in southern Portugal. There, at Cabo de Sao Vicente, in the extreme southwest corner of the country, he established an observatory and a school of navigation, and sent out several seafaring expeditions. In 1418, Joao Goncalves Zarco and Tristo Vaz reached

the islands of Madeira and Porto Santo. The Azores in the mid-Atlantic were charted in 1427 and Prince Henry sent out Portuguese settlers (colonizers) to both island groups.⁹⁸

Portuguese voyages of exploration continued after Prince Henry's death, with navigators edging down the coast of West Africa. In 1482, Diogo Cao (circa 1445–1486) erected a stone on the Congo River, and in 1488, Bartolomeau Diaz (circa 1450–1500) rounded the Cape of Good Hope in a violent storm, opening the way for exploration of the coast of southeastern Africa and the route to the east. This was followed up by Vasco da Gama (1469–1525) who rounded the Cape in 1497 and reached Calicut in southwest India in 1498. On his next expedition, in 1502, he established European colonies in Mozambique.⁹⁹

The Genoan, Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) conceived the idea of reaching India by sailing west. After years of trying to interest sponsors, he persuaded Ferdinand and Isabella, king and queen of Castile, to back him. Columbus set sail in the Fall of 1492 with three ships, the 117-foot *Santa Maria* and the 50-foot caravels *Pinta* and *Nina*. Two months later, he made landfall on the Bahamian island of Guanahani, which he renamed San Salvador. After two more weeks of sailing, he reached Cuba, first experiencing tobacco in the form of cigars. Columbus was slow to realize that he had not landed in the East Indies as expected, but had rather unknowingly sailed into the “New World.” In time cartographers were forced to redraw the map, and Spanish and Portuguese explorers filled in the picture of the Americas and West Indies.¹⁰⁰

Brazil was added to the Eurocentric view of the world by the Spaniard Vincente Yanez Pinzon (1460–1523) and the Portuguese Pedro Alvarez Cabral (circa 1467–1520) in the same year, 1500; both claimed it for their respective monarchs. Pinzon was appointed governor of Brazil by Ferdinand and Isabella, but in fact the Treaty of Tordesillas, ratified by the pope in 1494, “gave” Brazil to Portugal. Portuguese navigators continued to explore the southern Atlantic and eastern Africa, mapping Madagascar (1500); St. Helena and the Seychelles (1502); and Mauritius, Malaysia, and Singapore (1511).¹⁰¹

The Spaniards overran Central and South America, conquering and destroying the Aztec and Inca civilizations in search of gold and silver. The Pacific Ocean was sighted by a European in 1513, when Spanish conquistador Vasco Nunez de Balboa (1475–1519) reached the ocean after occupying Panama; he named it *El Mar de Sur* (The Southern Sea). In 1516, Juan Diaz de Solis (circa 1450–1516) reached Rio de Plata in Argentina. In 1519, Hernan Cortes (1485–1547) reached Tenochtitlan (present-day Mexico City), the capital city of Aztec emperor, Montezuma II (ruled, 1502–1520), and plundered the king's treasure house, called Teucalco.¹⁰²

The Portuguese Ferdinand Magellan (circa 1480–1521) sailed as captain-general of a Spanish fleet of five ships westward from Seville in 1519 and swept through what became known as the Magellan Strait in southern Chile (1520). As he navigated his remaining three ships into calmer waters a month later, he entered *El Mar de Sur*, which he renamed the Pacific Ocean because its waters were tranquil. After 59 days of extreme privation they reached the Tuamotu Archipelago and Guam, and then finally Cebu in the Philippines a few weeks thereafter (1521). Magellan was killed on the Philippine island of Mactan and only the *Vittoria*, commanded by Juan del Cano (circa 1476–1526), succeeded in rounding the Cape of Good Hope to complete the circumnavigation and return to Spain with 31 men.¹⁰³

The interior of Africa was so inhospitable that it remained inaccessible, and only offshore islands or coastal enclaves were settled to provide watering and transit points on the journey east. Exploration of the interior of Africa by Europeans had to wait largely until the 19th century and was driven by the interests of empire-building and missionary activity. The first European infiltrations were focused on the Sahara in the north, the sources of the great rivers, and the watershed of the central highlands, which revealed a chain of East African lakes.¹⁰⁴

The source of the Blue Nile, the chief tributary of the main river, the White Nile, was charted in 1770 by Scotsman James Bruce (1730–1794) at Lake Tana, Ethiopia. James Kingston Tuckey (1776–1816), an Irish officer in the British Navy, was dispatched to

explore the headwaters of the Congo River in 1815. At the time, geographers thought there might be a connection between the headwaters of the Congo and those of the Niger. Tuckey only penetrated 300 miles (480 km) up the 2800-mile (4500 km) river before dying of fever in 1816 but sent back valuable notes on his finds. Meanwhile, Scotsman Hugh Clapperton (1788–1827) and Englishman Dixon Denham (1786–1828) had been sent to locate the source of the Niger River. They crossed the Sahara from the north and ran into Lake Chad in 1823. Clapperton made a further expedition to find the source of the Niger starting from the Bight of Benin in 1825 but died in Sokoto, Nigeria. The Niger River's source was finally mapped by Scotsman Alexander Gordon Laing (1793–1826), who crossed the Sahara to reach Timbuktu in 1826, but was killed soon after. German missionary Johannes Rebmann (1820–1876) was the first European to sight Mt. Kilimanjaro in 1848 and, similarly, Mt. Kenya was first seen by the German, Johann Krapf (1810–1881) in 1849.¹⁰⁵

Scottish missionary David Livingstone (1813–1873) came upon the Victoria Falls on the Zambesi River in 1856 and was commissioned in 1858 by the British government to map the Zambesi further. He went on to locate Lake Nyasa. In 1856 Richard Burton (1821–1890) and John Hanning Speke (1827–1864) were similarly sponsored to conduct an expedition to the East African lakes, which led to their locating Lake Tanganyika in 1858. Speke went on to chart Lake Victoria and returned in 1860 with James Grant (1827–1892) to explore the lake and to establish that the Ripon Falls, which exit from the lake, were in fact the source of the Nile.¹⁰⁶

On a further expedition in 1866 Livingstone ended up at the Lualaba River. He fell ill and was not heard from for some months, during which time several expeditions were mounted to ascertain his whereabouts. In 1871, he was found in the village of Ujiji on the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika by the Welsh-American Henry Morton Stanley (1841–1904), who had been dispatched by the *New York Herald* newspaper. Stanley returned to Africa in 1874, followed the Lualaba to its junction with the Congo and descended the Congo to the sea.¹⁰⁷

In 1873 an English expedition to find Livingstone was mounted by Verney Lovett Cameron (1844–1894). He arrived in time to discover the corpse of the famous surveyor, who had died in Old Chitambo (modern Zambia), being carried by his native companions to the coast. Cameron went on to Lake Tanganyika and continued west, hoping to descend the Lualaba River. He was prevented by native hostility and instead continued overland, reaching Benguela in 1875 and becoming the first European to cross Africa from coast to coast. The Ruwenzori mountains — which were determined by Henry Morton Stanley to be the “mountains of the moon” that had been described by the Egyptian geographer Ptolemy (82–150CE) — were climbed in the following century by the Italian Luigi, Duke of Abruzzi (1906).¹⁰⁸

In the northern hemisphere, an early obsession of a series of expeditions was to find a way from the North Atlantic to the North Pacific: the Northeast Passage was sought from the north of Finland and Russia to Asia and the Northwest Passage from the north of Canada to the Alaskan coast. Englishman Hugh Willoughby (circa 1500–1554) led three ships to find the Northeast Passage across northern Asia in 1553–1554. The crews of two ships died of scurvy while trying to endure the winter at Arzina Reka in Lapland. The third, commanded by Richard Chancellor (died, 1556), reached the White Sea in northern Russia; he returned overland via Moscow. Dutch navigator Willem Barents (circa 1550–1579) made three expeditions in search of the Northeast Passage. He died off the island of Novaya Zemlya in the Kara Sea but his journal survived, to be found in 1875. The passage eastward across the entire north coast of Russia, and hence the first circumnavigation of Eurasia, was achieved by the Finn-Swede, Nils Adolf Erik Nordenskjöld (1832–1901) in the *Vega*, captained by the Swede, Adolf Arnold Louis Palander (1842–1920). The *Vega* left Norway and reached Kolyutschin Bay, short of the Bering Strait, in three months (1878).¹⁰⁹

The Northwest Passage was first attempted by Genoan-Englishman John Cabot (circa 1424–1500), who sighted what was probably Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, in 1497. Englishman Martin

Frobisher (circa 1535–1594) made three expeditions in 1576–1578, visiting Labrador, Frobisher Bay, and Baffin Island, but had to turn back. In 1819, William Parry (1790–1855) found the entrance to the passage at Bounty Cape. Exploration went on for 409 years until the passage (east-west) was finally traveled by a crew led by Norwegian Roald Amundsen (1872–1928) in 1903–1906.¹¹⁰

Ever since people began to navigate using compasses showing the magnetic north, the poles of the Earth have exercised enormous fascination. For reasons that are not wholly understood, the magnetic poles, to which compasses align themselves, “wander.” When the magnetic south pole was reached in 1908, it was in Victoria Land, Antarctica, but it has migrated 550 miles (885 km) since then and at the end of the 20th century, it was in Adelie Land.¹¹¹

The first recorded crossing of the Antarctic Circle was by Englishman James Cook (1728–1779) in 1774. In the industrial era, Antarctica was sighted by Edward Bransfield (circa 1783–1852) in 1820. The Norwegian Carsten Borchgrevink (1864–1934) was a member of the first European party to land on the Antarctic continent in 1894 and then in 1898–1899, of the first group to spend the winter there, sparking the race for the South Pole. In 1901–1904, Robert Scott (1869–1912) from the United Kingdom explored the Ross Sea and ran into what became known as King Edward VII Land. In 1908, the magnetic south pole was first reached by Austrian Douglas Mawson (1882–1958) in an expedition led by Irishman-Englishman Ernest Shackleton (1874–1922).¹¹²

The Norwegian Roald Amundsen was first to the South Pole in 1911, beating Scott by a month. The members of Scott’s expedition all died on the return journey. In 1928–1929, Richard Byrd from the United States flew to the South Pole and Lincoln Ellsworth (1880–1951), also an American, flew across the Antarctic continent in 1935. Between 1979 and 1982, English adventurer Ranulph Fiennes (1945–present) led the Transglobe expedition, which visited both poles following the Greenwich meridian in a circumnavigation of the earth, north-south-north.¹¹³

At the Arctic, between 1893 and 1896, Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen (1861–1930) deliberately let his ship, the *Fram*, get

iced in the north of Siberia. The Fram drifted with the ocean current beneath the pack ice toward Greenland, until Nansen left the ship and reached the farthest point achieved. This expedition showed that there was no Arctic continent but that the Arctic was a vast frozen ocean. The magnetic north pole was first located by Scotsman James Clark Ross (1800–1862) in 1831 on the west side of the Boothia Peninsula, northern Canada. In 1926, US aviators Richard Byrd (1888–1957) and Floyd Bennett (1890–1928) made the first airplane flight near to the North Pole. In 1958, the US submarine Nautilus crossed the North Pole beneath the ice cap.¹¹⁴

The above expeditions, explorations, and journeys were conducted by Europeans on a mission of colonialism and imperialism. None of this they did in the obedience of God. The Muslims, however, have a duty to go into the world to determine why societies disintegrated and why civilizations fell. The words of the Qur’an “*Sirū fī al-arḍ: Go out into the world,*” were not only aimed at the non-Muslims so that they may ascertain why bygone societies no longer exist and why empires vanish, but also at the Muslims, so that they learn from earlier human social failures.

The Islamic world order will be one in which all official barriers and all governmental restrictions and obstacles will be dismantled for the purpose of encouraging people to investigate why societies and nations wither away. This has to be done for the benefit of mankind — in conformity to His orders. Unlike the Europeans who traveled to the ends of the earth to confiscate natural resources and to open up new markets for their corporations, unlike this imperialistic project, the Islamic odyssey will seek to ennoble humanity as it sidelines colonialism, imperialism, and “globalization.” This is the difference between *al-ladhīna āmanū* and Euro-American explorations for exploitation.

Ownership without Mercy Leads to Tyranny

This next lesson travels behind a social attitude that despises the authenticity of the Qur'anic scripture and a public mind that refuses to admit the validity of Muhammad's (ﷺ) prophethood. It comes in the wake of certain people's contempt and mockery at Allah's (ﷻ) words, which have been relayed by Allah's Prophet. In the previous lesson, these people were reminded of societies that collapsed and generations that passed away precisely because they turned their backs on God, turned a blind eye to scripture, and turned away from their prophets,

- (6:12) Say, "Unto whom belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth?" Say, "Unto Allah, who has willed upon Himself the law of grace and mercy." He will assuredly gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection, [the coming of] which is beyond all doubt: yet those who have squandered their own selves, it is they who refuse to commit [to Him],
- (6:13) Although His is all that dwells in the night and the day, and He alone is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.
- (6:14) Say, "Am I to take for my master anyone but Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, when it is He who gives nourishment and Himself needs none?" Say, "I am bidden to be foremost among those who surrender themselves [unto Allah], and not to be among those who ascribe divinity to any beside Him."
- (6:15) Say, "Behold, I would dread, were I [thus] to rebel against my Sustainer, the suffering [that would befall me] on that awesome Day [of Judgement]."
- (6:16) Upon him who shall be spared on that Day [of Accountability], He will indeed have bestowed His grace: and this will be a manifest triumph.
- (6:17) And if Allah should touch you with misfortune, there is none who could remove it but He; and if He should touch you with good fortune, it is He who has the power to will anything:

قُلْ لِمَنْ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ قُلْ لِلَّهِ كُنِبَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةُ
 لِيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ
 فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَلَهُ مَا سَكَنَ فِي الْآلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ
 الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٣﴾ قُلْ غَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَتَّخِذُ وَلِيًّا فَاطِرِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ يُطْعَمُ
 وَلَا يُطْعَمُ قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ
 مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ
 عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٥﴾ مَنْ يُصِرْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهُ وَذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ
 الْأَمِينُ ﴿١٦﴾ وَإِنْ يَمَسُّكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ وَإِنْ
 يَمَسُّكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٧﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ
 وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٨﴾ قُلْ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً قُلِ اللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ بَيْنِي
 وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنذِرَكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ بَلَغَ أَيْنَكُمُ لَتَشْهَدُنَّ
 أَنَّ مَعَ اللَّهِ الْهَاتَةَ أُخْرَى قُلْ لَا أَشْهَدُ قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنِّي
 بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

- (6:18) For He alone holds sway over His creatures, and He alone is the Truly Wise, the All-Aware.
- (6:19) Say, “What could most weightily bear witness to the truth?” Say, “Allah is witness between me and you; and this Qur’an has been revealed to me so that on the strength thereof I might warn you and all whom it may reach.” Could you in truth bear witness that there are other deities side by side with Allah? Say, “I bear no [such] witness!” Say, “He is the One God; and, behold, far be it from me to ascribe divinity, as you do, to any beside Him!” (al-An‘ām:12–19).

The tone of the lesson is conversational as it makes a case against social blocs of people who have been unwilling to open up their minds to the truth. The word *say* appears nine times in this short lesson, an indication of the imperative to engage objectors in a process of answering for the erroneous position they have taken. Because the issue at hand is not a trivial one; it is one of history, survival, and destiny. People cannot be left to act in ways that dismiss divinity and disregard the issue of deity without having to answer for such behavior. The authority of Allah (ﷻ) is so binding on the soul of man that this matter cannot be reduced to a theological argument or scaled down to a philosophical point of view.

In this new wave of instructions, one cannot miss how important it is to clarify the *ulūhīyah* and *rubūbīyah* (the binding godliness and the sustaining authority) of Allah (ﷻ). Thus, the committed Muslims are required to spell the fact of the matter out clearly and neatly: that Allah (ﷻ) is in possession all, whether stationary or in motion; that He provides and He monitors; that His is the ultimate authority when it comes to power and control; and that what is of utility in life and what is not is ultimately His discretion. Man has to define or redefine his relationship with Him on this basis; and not on some abstract or irrelevant man-conceived basis. When man affirms that Allah is his confidence, his command, and in control of his self and society, he does so knowing that Allah — and only Allah (ﷻ) — provides for him when he cannot and does not provide for Him. Humans are humans and Allah (ﷻ) is God. And

this human-to-God relationship has to be normal or else it will be man who will lose,

Say, “Unto whom belongs what is in the heavens and on earth?” Say, “Unto Allah; He asserted upon Himself [the law of] grace and mercy.” He will assuredly gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection, [the coming of] which is beyond all doubt: yet those who have wasted their own selves, it is they who refuse to commit [to Him], although His is all that dwells in the night and the day, and He alone is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing (6:12–13).

Ownership Is God’s and Disposition Accords with His Mercy

The first issue of discussion, as presented here in these eternal words, is that of things owned or possessed, a notion whose precise definition varies greatly between different jurisdictions, cultures, and historical stages of development. In this immediate and direct encounter, the Prophet (ﷺ) is instructed from on high to ask his disputants and defectors who had been stiffening their resistance, “**Who owns whatever exists on earth and in the heavens?**” This question takes on an ideological twist in the capital-centered and corporate-controlled world of our time. In Anglo-US law, real property includes lands and buildings, and also, intangible interests in land, such as easements.¹¹⁵ Other kinds of property are known as personal property. Leases are classified as personal property, and are also referred to as “chattels real”; chattels are simply moveable goods that are considered as personal property. A gift of personal property made by will is a *legacy*; in England and Wales, a gift of real property made by will is a *devise*. A devise may specify the property involved; it may be worded to cover all property; or it may deal only with the residue of property, following a specific devise. Intellectual property is a general term covering intangible rights in the product of intellectual effort. It includes copyright in published work, and patents granted to protect new inventions. In Scotland, the terms

heritable and *moveable property* are used instead of real and personal property, and the term *devise* is not used, all gifts being legacies. Some things are not deemed ownable, such as outer space.

The fact that everything belongs to Allah (ﷻ) has long been eclipsed by the power of privileged classes and the acquiescence of the poor classes. **“All that is in the heavens and on earth belong to Allah...”** has been hustled into the world of dreamers and idealists by concepts that have more to do with institutionalizing greed than with affirming man’s subordinate position as a trustee of God. In today’s world, there is no society, no community, nor even individuals that premise their lives on the fact that everything in existence is the real-time and publicly acknowledged possession of Allah (ﷻ). In the *jāhili* concepts of the dominant Western (secular) domain of thought that excludes God from His attribute of Mālik al-Mulk (the Possessor of everything and all), there are myriad legal definitions of the meaning of “ownership” as it pertains to certain circumstances or situations.

Today, people, through the enforcement capacity of governments that create laws out of the opinions of jurists, have legally acknowledged the “creation” of an ownership right in real property through hostile, open, and continuous possession for a period of time, such as when a squatter seizes possession, or a tenant refuses to pay rent. The period required was traditionally 20 years, but is now 12 years in England and Wales (with exceptions for crown land or land owned by charitable institutions), and is fixed by statute from 5–20 years in most US jurisdictions. This conception is called *adverse possession*.¹¹⁶

Next comes the notion of *community property*. This is a legal theory of property ownership in which all of a couple’s earnings and property acquired during marriage, subject to certain exceptions (for example, gifts and inheritance), are owned jointly by the “community” and divided equally in the event of a divorce; as opposed to separate property, in which each spouse owns his or her own property individually. Many US states have adopted community property laws, which are regarded as more equitable to women, though the separate system is still used in England and Wales.¹¹⁷

In the *jāhili* legal system, there is something known as *copyright*. This is an ownership of and right of control over all possible ways of reproducing a “work,” that is, the product of an original creative act by one or more people, in a form that makes it possible to be copied. In particular, copyright protection is given to literary, dramatic, and artistic works (paintings, drawings, photographs, etc.), sound recordings, films, television and sound broadcasts, and various productions of new technology. All major countries (except for China, and that may be changing) and most minor ones have copyright laws, and international protection is given via two major conventions. The laws of each country differ, but there are important characteristics common to most. Copyright is a property owned by the (human) creator (unless working under a contract of employment), but it is transferable; the creator can either assign full copyright to another party or, retaining copyright, lease out (directly or through a publisher or agent) any of the separate rights (for example, to translate) that make up the copyright. It extends to all works of the creator: the hurried private letter receives as much protection as the great novel. Copyright, however, is finite; at some time or other, commonly 50 years after the creator’s death, the work falls into public ownership and can be copied without permission. It is also divisible; for example, copyright of a novel will include the right to publish in translation, to turn into a film, to anthologize, etc. It is independent of the work as a physical object meaning that ownership of a manuscript or painting does not in and of itself constitute ownership of the copyright. The 1988 Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act introduced for the first time in the UK the concept of authors’ and illustrators’ moral rights. These include the right of paternity (the right of the author or creator to be identified as such) and the right of integrity (the right not to have the work subjected to unjustified modification). These rights are retained by the creator and not assigned along with copyright.¹¹⁸

Another creeping concept that erodes the original fact of Allah’s (ﷻ) possession and ownership of all things is the idea of *fixture*, an object that is regarded for legal purposes as an integral part of the land belonging to an owner. Both the degree and the

purpose of annexation are relevant to deciding whether the object has become a fixture or remains a chattel. It may be important to define fixtures when land is transferred; for example on a sale of land it is implied, unless otherwise agreed, that fixtures are left for the purchaser. Fixtures can be distinguished from fittings by whether the procedure of removal would cause damage.¹¹⁹

A world void of Allah's (ﷻ) master ownership has begotten the notion of *freehold*. This is land or property held for use by the owner without obligation to any other owner. Freehold is in contrast to *leasehold*, where the leaseholder has possession only for some finite period (for example, 99 years), subject to payment of ground rent, reversion of the property to the ground landlord at the end of the lease, and possibly restrictions on the uses to which the property can be put. The concept of leasehold was in decline at the time of US independence, and never became important in the colonies or the US thereafter. Closely associated with the latter is the legal arrangement known as *lease*, also known as a *tenancy*, whereby the lessor (or landlord) grants the lessee (or tenant) the right to occupy and use land or property for a defined period of time, usually on payment of rent. The period may be fixed (for example, 10 years) or periodic (say, monthly). The term is also used widely in connection with the rental of property other than land.¹²⁰

Interfering with Allah's (ﷻ) merciful possession of property is the capitalists' and monopolists' usage of a financial instrument called *mortgage* (from Old French, literally meaning *dead pledge*). This is an arrangement whereby a lender (the mortgagee) lends money to a borrower (the mortgagor), the loan being secured on the mortgagor's property. Mortgages have played a significant role in proliferating the debt slavery of average wage earners by parlaying their (American) dream of owning a home into the organized extortion of their resources. However, mortgages are not confined to loans used to buy homes or land. Mortgages of chattels are possible, but the complexity of the relevant law has meant that such mortgages are uncommon.¹²¹

Similarly, what is known as *restrictive covenant* trespasses onto the generous authority and ownership of land by God, wherein man

is His trustee. This is a deed in which one person (the covenantor) undertakes a negative obligation for the benefit of another (the covenanted). In the context of land, a restrictive covenant may be transmitted to burden subsequent owners of a property, for example, a promise not to build. Discriminatory restrictive covenants (as in a promise not to sell to an African American) are unenforceable in the United States.¹²²

And finally, there is the arbitrary, God-excluding definition of *trespass*. This is the unlawful entry onto the property of another, inclusive of entry below the land (through mining, for instance) and within a reasonable distance above the land (as in shooting a bullet). Historically, the notion includes any unlawful act that interferes with another's property or rights. Despite the widely posted notice, trespassers can be sued, not prosecuted.¹²³

The *āyah* here teaches those whose greed has induced their formulation of an ungodly legal system that the point of origin and the point of departure in matters of property, possession, and proceeds belong to Allah (ﷻ). In particular, this alludes to the scriptural assertion that everything and all things fixed, movable, above the earth or beneath it, in outer space and the universe, in the dimensions of time and space, and whatever may be accessible or non-accessible to man is the holding of Allah (ﷻ). When short-lived and transient humans do take possession of something it is within the architecture of His grace and in conformity with His laws.

In a world where most people possess very little and a few possess copiously, the subject of property and ownership is an important and highly emotional one. Sometimes the mere pronunciation of the word *mine* can produce unpleasant feelings because what is mine, when that term is understood to indicate exclusiveness, is not yours. Likewise, expressing the word *ours* can have the same effect if it is used to denote exclusiveness with regard to a certain privileged group. Of course, it could be pointed out that some sort of control over resources would seem to be necessary in human society in order to avoid chaos. Even if this premise is to be accepted, however, major questions remain regarding the notion of property, of claims that things are proper to one as opposed to another, that

he or they own those things. What, for instance, are the limits of ownership? What kind of exclusive property rights, if any, can justifiably be claimed? What obligations does ownership bring with it?

In the Hebrew Bible there is a good deal about the ownership of land, perhaps the most controversial of all kinds of proprietorship. Like so much else in the Bible, this has to be understood within the context of the covenant God established with the Israelis. According to their current twist on the Bible, land was gifted to them by the Lord after their liberation from bondage in Egypt and their period of wandering in the desert. The distribution of the country among the tribes is described in some detail in the Books of Joshua (chapters 13–19) and Numbers (26:52–56).¹²⁴

Inevitably, in the passage of time, things would go well for some and badly for others. However, the Israelis were never to forget that the land was a gift from God for all of them. Legislation was therefore introduced to protect the poor and to prevent the rich from accumulating too much wealth. Measures were introduced, for instance, to inhibit the acquisition of more than one's fair share of land. One such measure was the jubilee year, when land that had been acquired during the previous 50 years was to be returned to its original owner, and people who had been reduced to serfdom as a result of debt were to be liberated (Leviticus, 25:8–17).¹²⁵

Other interesting prescriptions are found in the Books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. For six years the Israelis were to sow and gather their produce. In the seventh year, however, they were to let the land lie fallow (unused). The food it produced was to be for the poor, and what they left could be eaten by the wild animals (Exodus, 23:10–11). Even in normal years farmers were not to reap right up to the edge of their fields or completely strip their vineyards. Something was to be left for the poor and the foreigners (Leviticus, 19:9–10). At the end of every third year, moreover, tithes of harvests were to be collected in the communities so that Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows could eat all they wanted (Deuteronomy, 14:28–29).¹²⁶

The prescriptions regarding the sabbatical year in the Book of Deuteronomy appear to go beyond matters relating to land. In that

year a creditor holding a pledge from a fellow Israeli was implored to release him from it. These measures were designed to ensure that no poor would be among them (Deuteronomy, 15:1–11). How well such prescriptions were adhered to at various periods in the history of the 12 tribes is a matter open to debate. What is germane here, however, are the teachings and belief system on which they were based. Land was not to be sold outright because it belonged to God. The Israelis were His guests (Leviticus, 25:23–24). The land was given to them so that all could benefit from it.¹²⁷

Concern for the poor and the needy permeates the whole of the Bible, but complementary teachings that should not be ignored are those regarding the dangers inherent in the accumulation of riches. Nowhere is this stated with more insistence than in the New Testament writings attributed to St. Luke. Therein is evidence of Jesus' (ﷺ) disciples being told they must be on guard against avarice of any kind because life does not consist in possessions (Luke, 12:15). One who accumulates possessions that he does not need is a fool (Luke, 12:13–21). Jesus (ﷺ) himself has nowhere to lay his head, and simplicity of lifestyle, it seems, is expected of his immediate followers (Luke, 9:57–58). A rich man is advised to sell all that he has and give the money to the poor (Luke, 18:18–23). The plain fact is that one cannot serve both God and money (Luke, 16:13). With all this, the conclusion that it is harder for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven than it is for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle (Luke, 18:24–25) cannot be unexpected. In Acts of the Apostles, there are narratives of those who shared the faith apparently taking heed of such warnings, for they owned everything in common (Acts, 2:44–45). Without a doubt, idol worship was a large part of the problem. St. Paul spells that much out when he tells the Ephesians they can be quite certain that those who indulge in greed, which, he says, is worship of a false god, cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (Ephesians, 5:5–6).¹²⁸

Several fathers of the Church, including such luminaries as St. Ambrose (circa 339–397CE) and St. John Chrysostom (circa 347–407CE), stressed the fact that the goods of the earth are for the benefit of all mankind. Strong language peppered in their writings

is used to convey the message that those who unnecessarily amass wealth for their own exclusive use are, in effect, stealing what belongs to the poor, even when such accumulation is “legally” garnered. Thus, if they then give alms, they, in a sense, are merely returning stolen goods.¹²⁹

Some sort of right to private property would seem to have been acknowledged by many of the fathers, but the notion of ownership is modified by that stewardship. Those who have possessions are stewards or administrators of those things, and they should use them to meet the needs of others as well as their own. In this regard, it is interesting to note how St. Chrysostom takes up the theme of Jesus’ (✝) identification with the poor and remarks on the futility of adorning church buildings and of providing golden cups for Christ’s table while leaving him homeless, dressed in rags, and starving. He also points out that the poor person in distress is more properly a temple than is a church building.¹³⁰

The patristic writers (early Christian theologians) were well aware of the dangers riches bring to those who possess them. St. Chrysostom, for instance, builds on the theme that one cannot worship both God and money. It is impossible, he writes, for an avaricious person to see the face of Christ. St. Cyprian (died, 258CE) refers to the danger of being enslaved by money, of being tied by the bonds and chains of avarice, so that, having been saved by Christ, one is bound anew.¹³¹

Although he had been influenced by Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) kept close to the general theme of the patristic fathers. The community of goods, he tells us, is a part of natural law. The distribution of goods, on the other hand, he goes on to say, is not a matter of natural law, but for human agreement. The individual holding of possessions is therefore a result of such agreement as an addition to natural law. Human beings, he maintains, have a twofold competence with regard to material things. One is to care for them. Bearing this in mind, it is therefore necessary for human life that people possess things. This is so for three reasons: (a) a person is more solicitous in caring for something that is his or her responsibility than for something that is held in

common or by many people; (b) human affairs are organized more efficiently if each person has his or her own area of responsibility; and (c) human beings live together in greater peace when all are content with their own tasks. Regarding this last point, St. Aquinas notes that quarrels often break out among people who hold things in common. Having thus spoken favorably about private ownership, he then turns to the second area of competence with regard to material things, which is the use and management of the resources of this world. Nobody, he says, is entitled to manage things as if they were exclusive to him or her. The interests of all should be respected, and all should be ready to share with others in case of necessity.¹³²

St. Aquinas' teaching regarding private ownership has met with a good deal of agreement over the years since he wrote; today, he is still widely quoted in writings on the subject. What some might call variations on his theme, however, have appeared from time to time. It has been suggested, for example, that the development and satisfaction of certain human creative and caring tendencies can only be achieved through private ownership. Some have argued, moreover, that private ownership is necessary for, or is at least an aid in, the defense of freedom. Having their own belongings, it is claimed, gives people greater autonomy and reduces the likelihood of interference by political authority. Whatever may be the truth of such claims, it would seem to be the case that nowadays many people, perhaps the vast majority, in the Judeo-Christian Western world regard private ownership as some sort of "natural right." It would seem that certain philosophers have had a part to play in the development of this state of affairs. The writings of John Locke, for example, seem to have exerted a good deal of influence, perhaps most especially in the United States. He taught that there is a natural moral law, discoverable by reason. Natural rights, including the right to property, derive from this natural law in Locke's scheme of things. Needless to say, numerous scholars who would claim to be reasonable have come to quite different conclusions.¹³³

The development of modern capitalism and industrialization has resulted in new complications regarding the whole subject of property and property rights. Now, for instance, a big deal is made

about copyright and patents, and similarly with regard to corporate ownership. One of the most important and controversial topics for discussion concerning capitalism, however, has been the ownership of the means of production, which are often complex, expensive, and themselves difficult to ascertain. Not so very long ago, in countries affected by the Industrial Revolution, the means of production came to be concentrated in the hands of comparatively few people. Profits from the sale of goods went to the owner of the materials and means of production. The workers were paid a wage, often a mere subsistence wage. In such a state of affairs, wrote Karl Marx, workers are alienated from the products they make. Those products belong to somebody else. Workers are also alienated from their productive activity, which is not voluntary but imposed. Marx even went so far as to say that, in the capitalist system, people become less human through work and are estranged from other human beings. Such is the lot of the proletariat in societies founded upon the notion of private property rights, as capitalist societies are. Hence, in Marx's view, this state of affairs can only be overcome if the privatizing of property is abolished.¹³⁴

There are some, possibly, who feel that the failure of communism as an economic system merely underscores the value of St. Aquinas' teachings on the subject of private property. Others, however, may be inclined to point out that the world of capitalism could also benefit from a rereading of Aquinas' words regarding the use of private property — and, of course, the writings of various church fathers and numerous other Christian scholars who have written on the same subject since the time of Aquinas. Most complaints about capitalism, it would seem, concern the *laissez-faire* variety, especially when practiced in an atmosphere of greed. It is possible, however, for governments to intervene in order to bring about modifications that control greed and promote the common good. Companies may be obliged by law, for example, to comply with certain minimum requirements regarding conditions of employment. It is also possible, of course, for companies to improve matters, with or without the help of legislation, by encouraging workers' participation in at least some aspects of decision making and by introducing profit-sharing

schemes for the workforce. All of this betrays an acknowledgment of the fact that property should not be used by the owner in an exclusive way, without due regard for other people. Governments, moreover, can, and often do, introduce monetary measures, clearly indicating a conviction that private ownership must bow to the demands of the common good. Taxation that brings about redistribution of wealth is an obvious example. The introduction of an inheritance tax is one of many measures to inhibit the accumulation of property in the hands of a few.¹³⁵

Governments may keep an eye on the common good when trying to decide whether certain utilities should be in the realm of private or public ownership. In the case of a particular nation, for instance, the government may see that the interests of the nation would be served best by public ownership of the entities responsible for the provision of water. There may also be grounds for considering similar action with regard to the provision of gas and electricity, and the maintenance and building of roads. It is, of course, possible that, because of different circumstances, public ownership of a certain utility is in the best interests of one nation but not of another. With regard to the arguments of Aquinas referred to above, it could be said that the problems associated with what might be called the absence of private ownership can be overcome by appointing responsible persons and paying them acceptable salaries.¹³⁶

The pressing need to protect the environment provides another reason for the introduction of measures by governments to introduce restrictions on the holding and use of property. An obvious example concerns the use of privately owned land. Given the experience the human race has had with unsafe constructions, appalling living conditions, overcrowded areas, and sheer ugliness, which have resulted from uncontrolled building in numerous cities throughout the world, it would seem reasonable to impose some restrictions on the granting of permits and licenses for construction activity. Another example is the control of the use of certain chemical substances on agricultural land and in factories when it is known that the use of such substances results in the pollution of rivers and reservoirs. Today, moreover, much is being said about

factors that could justify action by a government to restrict the uses of private property by its citizens in order to defend the rights of people in other countries. A particular government might, for example, comply with an international agreement by introducing legislation to prevent citizens using their property in such a way that it causes acid rain to fall on the forests of another country. Such governmental interference in the use of private property may be called for not only in defense of present-day citizens and foreigners but also in defense of future generations. Destruction of large parts of this planet by some property holders is obviously not good stewardship.¹³⁷

Today there is a good deal of discussion about the rights of non-human creatures. It is maintained by some, for instance, that the goods of the earth are for the benefit of all creatures, not just all humans. There is, of course, some disagreement concerning the rights of animals and, indeed, other creatures. Some advocates talk in terms of the “personhood” of certain animals (what this could mean in terms of the concept of *maskh* pertaining to historical humans who degenerated into ape-like and pig-like beings is not even on the radar of most Muslims today). Others do not put non-human creatures on a par with humans but accept that they do have rights. Both groups see a need to protect the habitats of non-humans. It can, of course, be argued that such protection of habitats is necessary for the promotion of human welfare. Even those who find it untenable to assign rights to other creatures should see that governments could be justified in introducing legislation to control the use of certain kinds of property in order for non-human species to be protected.¹³⁸

Some environmentalists have noted that deforestation and forest degradation have long been taking place primarily on land owned by governments. No doubt, it would be easy to produce quite a long list of damage caused to the environment and problems caused for the poor on land owned by governments or as a result of government legislation affecting privately owned property. While some public ownership and some governmental interference to restrict the holding and use of property can be justified, the committed

Muslims clearly need to do much more than make appeals for government control if they are to promote a truly scriptural attitude to property. Resocializing people to the greater emphasis in scriptural teaching upon stewardship and the basic notion that the goods of creation are for the benefit of all would surely help to improve matters. A further step might be taken in the right direction if scriptural organizations were to look more carefully at the ways in which they use the property they hold.

But the panacea remains in opening our minds to this open Book and going by it thoroughly and lovingly. In doing so we would avoid the polarization between the class of people that owns the earth and the other class that toils on earth. Acknowledging the ownership of Allah (ﷻ) is consistent with acknowledging His grace; on the other hand, acquiescing to the ownership of man is consistent with conceding to man's greed.

There is a real transformation in this lesson — a transformation from man's perceived ownership of commodities and proprietary control of resources to his realization that all these lands, natural resources, spontaneous environment, uncultivated wilderness, the oceans, space, and everything else is the domain and material possession of Allah (ﷻ). His mercy is inclusive of the poor, the dispossessed, and the underclass. With this guidance in hand, there is no need for an Aquinas or a Marx to argue this issue back and forth. And consistent with that, there is no need to experiment with political theories and ideologies to get this right. It is here, stated in plain language for everyone to see and understand. Man's problem is that his covetousness, undisciplined by divine guidance, consumes him in its destructive course. The excessive desire of the rapacious and selfish to acquire and possess *ad infinitum*, while omitting God from His rightful possession of things and excluding the poor and hungry from their rightful access to these things, moves them to lose sight of who they are in relationship to God and who God is in relationship to them,

He will assuredly gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection, [the coming of] which is beyond all

doubt: yet those who have misplaced themselves, it is they who refuse to commit [to Him], although His is all that dwells in the night and the day, and He alone is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing (6:12–13).

Mercy as the Infrastructure of God's Ownership

The ownership of Allah (ﷻ) is distinguished by grace and seemliness — a sense of propriety and consideration for others. If the world is His, if the planet belongs to Him, and if everything reverts to Him, then at the very least, the committed Muslims should make this a fact of life, not a statement that lends itself to assumptions and hypotheses. When Allah (ﷻ) is in the real sense of the word and in the practical behavior of man the owner of all and sundry and He wills upon Himself goodwill and a disposition to kindness and compassion, then there will indeed be an arrangement of justice that preempts the dispossession of people at the survival level of life. Several hadiths point to Allah's (ﷻ) benevolence and mercy,

When Allah created everything there is, He decreed in a writ above His throne: verily, My mercy precedes My anger.¹³⁹

Allah has rendered mercy into one hundred portions; He withholds ninety-nine to Himself, and He brings down to earth one portion [only]. It is this portion of mercy that is expressed by all creatures, part of which can be ascertained by a beast raising its limb lest it strikes its young one.¹⁴⁰

Allah has one hundred blessings. One of them is the expression of kindness among created beings; and the other ninety-nine [are reserved] for the Day of Resurrection.¹⁴¹

Out of the 100 parts of mercy, the one portion or share that has been given to the world of man can be observed in the way a mother loves and provides care for her child, in the way even animals tend to their young ones, in the way we express our passion

and deep love for our babies and seniors, and in the way we care for and sympathize with people who are infirm, ill, or otherwise weak and frail. Family ties and compassion are a tier of this God-given mercy unto mankind. Thus, if man would only reflect on this issue, he would understand how Allah’s (ﷻ) possession of this world is expressed through compassion, pity, and sympathy.

Allah’s benevolent Prophet (ﷺ) never tired of teaching his companions about this grand mercy. One illustration of the depth of love, compassion, and attention people ought to be devoting to one another when God’s mercy becomes human behavior is the following incident. War captives were brought into the presence of the Prophet (ﷺ). Within this company was a woman with an impulse to breastfeed (a baby). After looking around and finding an infant that needed her breast milk, she took it, placed it on her breast, and breastfed it. Observing this development, the Prophet (ﷺ) turned to the Muslims of mercy around him and asked, “*Do you think this woman would [ever] throw her suckling into the fire?*” They said, “By Allah! Never would she do such a thing if she could help it!” Then, he said, “*Thus, Allah has more mercy on His subjects than she does toward her baby.*”¹⁴² In another hadith, he said, “*Compassionate people shall be worthy of Allah’s mercy. Have mercy on earthlings and the divine will have mercy on you.*”¹⁴³

Accusations of terrorism and brutality against the Muslims can only stick if their core understanding of self is not sustained by these *āyāt* and hadiths; otherwise such slander can easily be dismissed as lies and innuendo. Listen, once again, to Rasūl-Allāh (ﷺ), “*Allah does not have mercy on people who do not express mercy.*”¹⁴⁴ On one occasion the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) kissed his grandson al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī. A man by the name of al-Aqra‘ ibn Ḥābis was present and he said, “I have ten children and I never kissed any of them!” The Prophet (ﷺ) looked at him and said, “*Whoever expresses no warmheartedness receives no warmheartedness.*”¹⁴⁵ The kindness and sympathy radiating from the Prophet’s (ﷺ) character was not reserved for human beings only, “**And [thus, O Prophet], We have sent You as [an evidence of Our] mercy toward all the worlds” (21:107).** His quality of behavior sprang from his acculturation by

Allah, and as Allah (ﷻ) is merciful to all, he too was merciful to all, and so should we be.

The Judeo-Christian (Euro-American) civilization prides itself on being debonair, genteel, or marked by refinement in taste and manners. In one aspect, this is demonstrated by their contemporary display of sensitivity toward the treatment and rights of animals. Some helter-skelter Muslims, unaware of the sordid material history that has brought the West to this show of passionate advocacy for living creatures that do not have the capacity to stand up for themselves, are bedazzled by this decorous and sophisticated attitude. These same Muslims, whose view of the whole picture has been obstructed, appear to not want to come to terms with the contradiction that while this materialistic Euro-American civilization is so compassionate to cats and dogs it is simultaneously so tempestuous to Palestinians and Muslims. Their authentic financial greed and superficial humane pity are bound together in such a disproportionate way that their pity for animals is dwarfed by their simultaneous covetousness of what anyone else possesses and contempt for anyone other than themselves. In order to get a handle on their contemporary animal rights theory, the Muslims need to analyze it within the context of the historically dominant philosophical modes of discourse about animals to which it is, at least in part, a response or even a development. There are six main ethical theories on the status of animals.

The first is the Humanocentric theory. According to this view, animals have no moral status. Humans have no direct duties to animals except insofar as some human interest is involved. Wanton cruelty may be wrong not because it infringes the rights of animals but because cruelty brutalizes human beings, or leads to similar activity in relation to human subjects. Morality, strictly speaking, only concerns what humans do to humans, or to other subjects insofar as they affect human subjects.

This theory may also be called the classical, or Aristotelian-Thomist view. In terms of systematic theology, it was the virtually unchallenged Christian view until the 18th century. As late as the middle of the 19th century, Pope Pius IX forbade the opening of an

animal protection office in Rome on the grounds that humans had duties to other humans, but none to animals. This position finds its clearest continuing expression in Roman Catholic moral theology, for example,

Zoophilists often lose sight of the end for which animals, irrational creatures were created by God, [namely, for] the service and use of man... In fact, Catholic moral doctrine teaches that animals have no rights on the part of man.¹⁴⁶

There are two main philosophical/theological justifications for this view, both derived at least in part from Aristotle and systematized in the Christian tradition mainly through the work of St. Thomas Aquinas. Firstly, animals are by divine providence and nature human slaves — given for human use,

Hereby is refuted the error of those who said it is sinful for man to kill brute animals; for by divine providence they are intended for man’s use according to the order of nature. Hence it is not wrong for man to make use of them either by killing or in any other way whatever.¹⁴⁷

Secondly, animals are by definition non-rational creatures; they cannot therefore possess a mind, or an immortal soul, and are not persons possessing rights. Their *raison d’être* is to serve the higher intellectual species, namely human beings.

Recent Roman Catholic teaching may have modified this stark Thomistic perspective. The encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (*The Social Concern*) specifically speaks of the need to respect “the nature of each being” within creation.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* does acknowledge that man owes animals “kindness” after the example shown by the saints. But the same *Catechism* reaffirms the major elements of Thomist thought. God still destines “all material creatures for the good of the human race.” It is “contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly,” and “it is

likewise unworthy to spend money on them [animals] which should as a priority go to the relief of human misery.”¹⁴⁹

The second of this list on the status of animals is the Contractualist theory. This view holds that rights and duties flow from persons who are capable of making contracts or entering into mutual obligations. In short, since there are no duties, there can be no rights. This is a variation of the standard Aristotelian-Thomist position. Aristotle held that justice required rational friendship, a quality that was impossible between those who were not equals, and hence slaves and animals — to take only two examples — were excluded from the moral community.¹⁵⁰ Aquinas held likewise that friendship was only possible between rational creatures.¹⁵¹

This view is reflected in modern theology, for instance, by Bernard Haring, “Nothing irrational can be the object of the Christian virtue of neighborly love. Nothing irrational is capable of the beautifying friendship with God.”¹⁵² The view is both confirmed and modified by the *Catechism* as follows, “One can love animals; one should not direct to them the affection due only to persons.”¹⁵³ Perhaps the best contemporary defense of contractualism is found in the work of John Rawls. While he accepts that it is wrong to be cruel to animals, even that “we have duties of compassion and humanity to them,” he nevertheless concludes that animals are “outside the scope of the theory of justice” and that it is not possible for a contractualist theory to “include them in a natural way.” The “considered beliefs” that we owe duties to animals apparently depend upon a metaphysical view of the world separate from contractualist doctrine.¹⁵⁴

Humanitarian theory represents the third of six. There are two key elements. Firstly, humans should prevent unnecessary cruelty and promote kindness to sentient (endowed with feeling and unstructured consciousness) beings, and secondly, humans should exercise benevolence or philanthropy toward inferior creatures — not least of all for their own (humans’) sake.

This theory, or rather sensitivity, was characteristic of what is now called the humanitarian movement, especially dominant in the 19th and 20th centuries, and which gave rise to such organiza-

tions as the Humanitarian League, the English and American Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Friends of Animals League. This movement was in conscious or unconscious reaction to Thomist scholasticism, which failed to include animals, at least directly, within the sphere of human moral responsibility. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), for example, was founded by an Anglican priest, Arthur Broome, in 1824. He penned the first prospectus of the Society in which he argued,

Our country is distinguished by the number and variety of its benevolent institutions... all breathing the pure spirit of Christian charity... But shall we stop here? Is the moral circle perfect so long as any power of doing good remains? Or can the infliction of cruelty on any being which the Almighty has endued with feelings of pain and pleasure consist with genuine and true benevolence?¹⁵⁵

The underlying argument is that cruelty to humans or animals is incompatible with the Christian faith. Indeed the Society recorded in its first minutes-book a resolution that it was a Christian Society based specifically on the Christian faith and on Christian principles. Perhaps the most progressive exponent of this general theory is Humphrey Primatt. His *Dissertation on the Duty of Mercy and the Sin of Cruelty to Brute Animals* (1776), maintained, “We may pretend to what religion we please, but cruelty is atheism. We may make our boast of Christianity, but cruelty is infidelity. We may trust to our orthodoxy, but cruelty is the worst of heresies.”¹⁵⁶

The fourth in this series is the Welfare theory. Though weak, welfare theory is almost indistinguishable from humanitarian theory, it is instructive to concentrate here on the strongest utilitarian welfare theory propounded by Peter Singer in the 1970s.¹⁵⁷ There are three key elements. Firstly, sentiency (generally defined as the ability to feel pain and suffering) is the only defensible boundary of moral concern between species. Secondly, once it can be reasonably supposed that a being is sentient, its suffering should

be taken into account morally. Thirdly, all sentient beings, human or animal, have an equal claim to due consideration of their interests as individuals. Perhaps it is worth pointing out that some appear to draw the line at mollusks (invertebrates having a soft unsegmented body usually enclosed in a shell); everything above that is considered sentient life.

As propounded by some, this view has no theological basis as such, but it is not difficult to prove one. From a Christian theological perspective, the Cross of Christ is God's vindication of innocent suffering. To inflict suffering on innocent, undefended, unprotected beings — provided that the suffering is unmerited and undeserved as of course it always is in the case of animals — is nothing less than intrinsically evil. It finds its strongest expression theologically in the Oxford sermon of Cardinal Newman in which he argued that suffering inflicted on innocent animals is morally equivalent to that inflicted upon Christ,

There is something so very dreadful, so satanic in tormenting those who have never harmed us, and who cannot defend themselves, who are utterly in our power, who have weapons neither of offense nor defense, that none but very hardened persons can endure the thought of it... Think then, my brethren, of your feelings at cruelty practiced upon brute animals, and you will gain one sort of feeling which the history of Christ's Cross and Passion ought to excite within you.¹⁵⁸

The practical upshot of the welfare theory is that animal suffering must be taken with the greatest seriousness and that all sentient beings have an equal claim to moral consideration. But this does not commit the utilitarian welfarist to an absolutist position. A utilitarian position is always open to the weighing of consequences, and so in Singer's own words, "...if one, or even a dozen animals had to suffer experiments in order to save thousands, I would think it right and in accordance with equal consideration of interests that they should do so."¹⁵⁹ In other words, according to the

utilitarian version of the welfare theory, if it could be shown that the suffering of some animals can save the suffering of many other creatures, it would be justifiable to make them suffer.

The fifth ethical position on the proper treatment of animals is the Rights theory. Again, there are three key elements. Firstly, animals are ends in and of themselves and must not be regarded as means to human ends: as resources, commodities, laboratory tools, or units of production. Secondly, all animals are, in the words of Tom Regan, “subjects of a life,” have inherent value, and therefore possess rights.¹⁶⁰ Thirdly, those beings that possess inherent value possess it equally, so it is normally wrong to infringe the rights of individual animals no matter the consequences.

There are secular and theological doctrines of animal rights. The secular philosophical view enunciated by Regan argues that animals are complex beings with emotions, desires, and interests — to such an extent that they bring subjectivity to our world. It is this subjectivity that makes them beings with inherent value. Regan argues that all mentally normal mammals of a year or more have rights equal to that of humans.¹⁶¹

The Judeo-Christian theological basis of rights, according to Andrew Linzey, holds that, while all creation has value, some beings have rights by virtue of their Creator’s right. Animals who are “...spirit-filled, breathing creatures, composed of flesh and blood, are subjects of inherent value to God.”¹⁶² According to this view, animals have “theos-rights” (literally *God-rights*) because it is the right of God that establishes the specific value of some living beings, “When we speak of animal rights we conceptualize what is objectively owed to animals as a matter of justice by virtue of their Creator’s right.”¹⁶³ In this sense, rights are not awarded, accorded, or bestowed, but recognized. The attainment of animal rights’ goals would require a transformation of human society as we know it. Such a society would be characterized by minimum disturbance to animal life and an end to all institutional abuse of animals in agriculture, science, and sport.

The sixth and final ethical perspective comes from the Generosity theory. Drawing on the Humanitarian theory, one theological

view argues that what humans owe animals requires even more than an acceptance of their rights. According to this view, man has a duty not only to respect the rights of animals but also to be morally generous,

Drawing upon the notion of divine generosity exemplified in the person of Jesus, [it is] suggest[ed] that the weak and defenseless should be given not equal, but greater, consideration. The weak should have moral priority.¹⁶⁴

The key elements of the argument are as follows. Firstly, humans are the deputized moral agents of God in creation, with a God-given responsibility to care for the earth generally and animals in particular. Secondly, this human power or “dominion” over animals should take as its model the Christ-given paradigm of lordship manifest in service. Thirdly, the logic of this Christological paradigm is that the “higher” should sacrifice itself for the “lower” and not the reverse. Fourthly, animals have an analogous status to that of children; adult humans have a special responsibility to both, and, finally, animals, like children, should be seen as having not equal claim but greater claim upon us, precisely because of their vulnerability and relative powerlessness.

The general conclusion of the generosity theory is that humans should generously and self-sacrificially work to promote the well-being of other creatures. The theological *raison d'être* of human beings is as “the servant species.” The notion that humans should seek their advantage, welfare, and survival at the cost of other species is replaced by a paradigm in which humans should bear for themselves whatever ills may flow from not using animals, rather than inflict suffering and death on creatures that are the subjects of a special trust.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Welfare, Rights, and Generosity theories represent an intellectual advance in terms of understanding the moral status of animals. The Humanocentric and Contractual theories, and even the Humanitarian, continue to keep animals out of the sphere of moral justice. Once Humanocen-

tric theory is rejected and it becomes accepted that causing suffering and death to animals is a morally significant issue, then radical conclusions in terms of individual behavior and social practice are likely to follow. The dominant social order of today has been, and still is, largely fashioned by the intellectual heritage of the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition. Hence, man continues to use animals as means to human ends: billions of them are hunted, ridden, shot, fished, worn, eaten, caged, exhibited, factory farmed, and experimented upon every year.

There are signs, however, that this once monolithic intellectual tradition and practice is breaking down, not least in matters relating to the status of women, environmental ethics, and the debate over the nature of sexuality. The animal Rights and Generosity theories anticipate an even greater weakening of this tradition and a return to those fundamental insights that have always been present within Western culture (to some degree), but have been insufficiently recognized and articulated. For example, the Judeo-Christian tradition, which has in many ways justified and sanctioned the ruthless (ab)use of animals, has always prided itself on a vision of universal peace inclusive of animal life (Isaiah, 11:1–9; Romans, 8:18–24). Specifically also, animals are included in the Noachic covenant (Genesis, 9:3). Karl Barth, to take only one modern example, maintains that the view in Psalm, 36:6 of God especially preserving humans and animals is “...a thread running through the whole of the Bible; and it first emerges in a way which is quite unmistakable when the creation of man is classified in [the Book of] Genesis, 1:24–28 with that of the land animals.”¹⁶⁵

Progressive theories can claim to have a basis in some layers of biblical theology and in the notion that God alone is the source of the value of all life forms. From this perspective, “modern” theories holding to a strong sense of responsibility toward animals are the result of a revival of an ancient spiritual insight concerning the intrinsic, God-given worth of animated creatures. In the same way Judeo-Christian tradition both justified the subordination of women to men and also provided a theological basis for women’s equality, so too has the tradition both justified and spurned animal abuse.

Which perception of animals — the view that they are here for man’s use, or the view that man should behave generously toward them and respect their rights — will prevail, only time will tell.

The current trend in Western societies, whose governments have no compunction about shedding Muslim blood in numerous wars of high and low intensities, is that there is no real alternative to the inclusion of sentients within the human moral circle. Accepting that, there can of course be room for legitimate discernment and debate. While the Rights theory holds many advantages in terms of demarcating appropriate moral limits to human behavior, it does not follow that rights language can, or should, convey everything of what needs to be said from a theological or philosophical standpoint about the moral status of animals. Rights language cannot by itself claim to be a comprehensive theory; talk of respect, care, generosity, love, and gentleness toward animals is not only appropriate but also essential.

The same kind of qualification seems appropriate in relation to questions of goals and strategy. To accept animal rights goals does not mean that all systems of gradual reform should be eschewed; on the contrary “progressive disengagement from injury” seems to be the most enlightened and effective strategy for moral reformers working in the West for progress with either human or animal causes. However, with regard to this matter — and all other matters — the best information comes from Allah (ﷻ), who has invested His entire creation with mercy. And so, when these people, despite their best intentions, refuse to consider what the Qur’an and the Prophet (ﷺ) have to say about this subject, they congenitally hamstring their strategies to limited achievement at best. One final caveat seems essential: animal rights thinking that renounces the use of sentient animals as means to human ends should also, logically, shun the use of fellow humans as means to (even moral) ends. In practice, this means that violence in pursuit of animal rights causes is morally self-contradictory and self-defeating.

In making a transition from the aforementioned intellectual twitches and twists in the Judeo-Christian tradition to the candid and conscientious Islamic position on the matter, what becomes

immediately evident is that there is no need for theorization and conceptualization. The facts speak for themselves. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said,

As a man was walking his way with increasing thirst, he came upon a well [of water]. He descended into the well and drank, then he came back up and left it. Thereupon he encountered a dog that was breathing quickly [spasmodically], virtually eating the soil to satisfy its thirst. This man observed, “It seems like this dog is ravaged by the [same] thirst that was ravaging me.” So he went down into the well and filled his leather shoe with water; he held it with his mouth and emerged from the well. Then he gave this water to the dog. For this, Allah thanked him [this man] and forgave him [his transgressions].

Some of the people around the Messenger (ﷺ) who were listening to this asked, “O Messenger of Allah! Are we rewarded [by Allah] for good behavior toward animate beings [beasts]?” He said, “You will be rewarded when behaving in a well-mannered way toward all animated beings with a hydrated liver.”¹⁶⁶ In another narrative, the Prophet (ﷺ) related, “On one hot day, a prostitute saw a dog circling a well with its tongue dribbling, because of thirst. She gave it a leather of water; and for that [God] effaced her sins.”¹⁶⁷ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Abdillāh heard his father say,

We were with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) on a journey when we saw a bird with two chicks. We took the two chicks [away from the nest]. Then the bird came back to the [nesting] area of its chicks with its feathers spread out wide over [the place the chicks were supposed to be]. When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) approached us [in that area] he inquired, “Who broke the heart of this mother-bird? Return its nestlings to it.” [The Prophet] saw a colony of ants that we had burnt and asked, “Who burnt this?” We said, “We did.” [Then] he said, “It behooves no one to inflict fire on anyone, except the Lord of the fire.”¹⁶⁸

These are clear and unequivocal examples of how the compassion and mercy of committed Muslims extend into the arena of life itself — and that includes the animal kingdom.

The quality of mercy only becomes a disposition when one expresses mercy and demonstrates pity. When adhering Muslims express their mercy, they gain more confidence and security, as they feel they are in the fellowship of Allah (ﷻ). Even when these Muslims are experiencing hard times, they are not given a reprieve from following through on matters and persons that require their compassion. The fact that *rahmah* (mercy) is a current and everlasting quality of divinity keeps a committed Muslim in a state of warmth and love. When Muslims themselves come under pressure and feel the strain of life they should never feel that Allah (ﷻ) has given up on them or that they are separated from His mercy and benevolence. Never. Sometimes the vulnerability in human nature moves certain people to think that the pressures of life are an indication of God having forsaken them. However, in the context of these *āyāt*, this would be an erroneous position. Since mercy is an attribute of Allah (ﷻ), closeness to Him entails that it be a vital aspiration for man and a hallmark of his character.

Allah's (ﷻ) all-encompassing *rahmah* finds further expression in His decree to reassemble humanity on the Day of Resurrection,

Say, “Unto whom belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth?” Say, “Unto Allah, who has willed upon Himself the law of grace and mercy.” He will assuredly gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection, [the coming of] which is beyond all doubt... (6:12).

The ultimate expression of grand mercy will be on display on that Day of Resurrection when all beings will be reassembled to witness this for themselves. Allah (ﷻ) created them all for a purpose; He gave them the world and its responsibilities — not for them to be wild, but to be wise. The mortal occupants of this world were not created in vain, they were not left to wander about like headless humans and pitiless people. And as purpose comes with a sense of

accountability, there should be no doubt that everyone is headed toward Yawm al-Qiyāmah. On that Day, everyone will be awarded the fruits of their worldly labor; no one will be shortchanged for his sincere works and devotional deeds. On this awesome Day of Qiyāmah, the value of worthy works will be increased tenfold while the demerit associated with dishonorable deeds will remain fixed. The reward for ethical efforts may be multiplied many times over, but sins and mistakes may be disregarded or omitted in accordance with Allah’s (ﷻ) will. In and of itself, this alone is a lofty expression of Allah’s (ﷻ) expansive mercy.

Pre-Islamic Arabians in their time of ignocracy (*jāhiliyah*) were in denial of the Day of Resurrection — much the same as today’s materialistic ignocracy. From then until now, the attitude of the diehard deniers has remained unchanged, and so the *āyah* is all-encompassing and thoroughgoing, **“He will definitely gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection...”** The losers on that Day will be the ones who did not commit to Allah (ﷻ) in this world. No sense of loss could be comparable to the inevitable reality that they would have lost their own selves. And when that is the case, how can they claim to own something? At the very least, a person’s petition for ownership is meaningful when he is in possession of himself. When he is not in control of his own self, he cannot assert a claim over anything else — even if the whole world was offered.

“Yet those who have wasted themselves, it is they who refuse to commit [to Him].” These are individuals and peoples who do not have a soul that is consciously connected to its Creator. Those who do not respond approvingly to this *dīn*, with all its gravitas and attractiveness, have failed at the level of man’s inherent aptitude and natural endowment toward assimilation with the divine. Their capacity to sense their disconnectedness from God has withered. This partially explains why they have no faith in Allah (ﷻ), why they refuse to commit their lives to Him, and why they spurn offering their time to Him. Hence, on Resurrection Day, they will end up losing access to Paradise and the company of Allah (ﷻ) because, in the world, they had dissociated from their God-given self, failing to maintain its godly standards.

God's Authority Lies at the Crux of All Scripture

“His is all that dwells in the night and the day, and He alone is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.” In this *āyah* there is a reference to Allah (ﷻ) being in control of and in possession of everything that inhabits nights and days. Man is apt to think of things in a way that binds these to a place(s). Here, however, he is forced to think of things as they relate to time. Time, which is one of the great enigmas of philosophy, seems to elude the grasp of thought. It is not an “object” of human experience that can be empirically studied in the manner of other things; rather it is the form and condition of all human experience. Time, of course, can be measured objectively. We are all familiar with clocks, and it is the natural clock — the Solar System — that gives rise to the succession of days, months, and years. This successiveness, that all things stand to one another in relations of *before* and *after*, is one of the fundamental characteristics of time. Here, too, the basic difference between time and space becomes evident. Though scientists talk of space-time, the distinction is that, in space, an object can move in any direction and come back to the starting point; time, on the other hand, is a one-way street. The order of before and after is irreversible. These ideas will make more sense when the human experience of time is contrasted with how time is objectively measured in the world.

Clock time is purely successive: day follows day and year follows year. The human experience with time, however, is not pure succession. Indeed, human beings find pure succession rather frightening, as the past swallows up one moment after another, and the future remains veiled in uncertainty. Human beings, through memory and anticipation, are able to transcend mere successiveness; they live in a “span” of time rather than in a knife-edge instant. They have even visualized the possibility (“eternal life”) of an experience in which past and future are gathered up in a present enjoyment that includes both — what some may call “the whole, simultaneous, and complete fruition of a life without bounds.” Perhaps this is a way of casually imagining the divine state of being, wherein, as some supposed, a thousand years are to God like a day

or a stint in the night. “Eternal life” then would not mean a life infinitely prolonged through time, but man’s participation in the divine experience of perfect simultaneous fruition, free from the tyranny of successiveness.

Another distinction between clock time and humanly experienced time is that the former is uniform: as the seconds tick by, each one is like all the others, for they are all quantitatively defined. For the human being, though, time is qualitative as well as quantitative. There are times in life that seem to drag on slowly, because they are empty, and times that simply flash by, because they are awash with activity. These are the times of crisis and decision, both in individual lives and in the history of societies. Some biblical scholars have made a distinction between uniform time and a time of crisis or fulfillment. Though this linguistic distinction has been challenged, what is meant by the biblical expression, “the fullness of time,” can nonetheless be recognized as a conjunction when the course of affairs has come to a decisive turning point.

Another question in some minds is whether time has a beginning or an end. In Christianity, it has generally been believed that there is both a beginning and an end, the time of creation and the time of consummation. In the 19th century, such ideas might have seemed utterly unscientific or anti-scientific. Nowadays, however, cosmologists can visualize “certainly” a beginning and possibly an end, and though their speculations have little to do with theological beliefs about creation and eschatology, they at least show that to talk of a beginning and an end is not an obvious absurdity. In this *āyah* Allah (ﷻ) says that everything within the domain of night and day belongs to Him (time specific), and in the previous *āyah*, that to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth (place specific). This means that whatever belongs to time and place in actual fact belongs to Allah (ﷻ).

After establishing the fact that Allah (ﷻ) is the Creator and the Owner, the Qur’an arrives at a point pertinent to man’s practical world. If he realizes that Allah (ﷻ) is the one who provides sustenance, that He is the one who offers what is advantageous and what is disadvantageous, that He is the Almighty and

the All-Conquering, that He can cause man to suffer agonizingly for his sins, then he can visualize the following awesome and awe-inspiring attribute of His majesty and glory,

Say, “Am I to take for my superior anyone but Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, when it is He who gives nourishment and Himself needs none?”
Say, “I am bidden to be foremost among those who resign themselves [unto Allah], and not to be among those who ascribe divinity to any beside Him.” Say, **“Behold, I would dread, were I [thus] to rebel against my Sustainer, the suffering [that would befall me] on that awesome Day [of Judgement].”** Upon him who shall be spared on that Day, He will indeed have bestowed His grace: and this will be a manifest triumph.

And if Allah should impact you with misfortune, there is none who could remove it but He; and If He should impact you with good fortune, it is He who has the power to will anything: for He alone holds sway over His creatures, and He alone is the Truly Wise, the All-Aware (6:14–18).

This discussion and treatment of the subject matter here touches on the essential issue around which there have been historical upheavals. Of quintessential concern here is the human and earthborn responsibility of affirming, trusting, and sustaining the concept of Allah’s (ﷻ) superiority, domination, sovereignty, and authority. The decay of all religions inspired and originated by God in human societies across the bands of time and the barriers of geography ensued from man’s denigration or minimization of these attributes of Allah (ﷻ).

The superiority, domination, and sovereignty of Allah (ﷻ) in the life of man depends upon how he assimilates this eternal fact into his conscious living and social behavior. The problem from antiquity until this day is that people have not come together on accepting and “institutionalizing” the authority of Allah (ﷻ) alone.

In present-day usage, an *author* is commonly the composer of a written text or a score. The classical meaning of the word, however, was much more broad: an *author* (*auctor* in Latin) was the creator or founder of any thing, institution, or domain. He was considered a begetter, a father, an originator, or maker, and was seen as exercising unconditional authority to determine truth and to lay down and enforce the law within the domain belonging to him. What he made, he had the right to rule: authorship conferred authority.

In this connection, what comes to mind is that the female ovum was only recently discovered in the Western world in the early-19th century. The earlier biological theory was mostly patriarchal in the strict sense: the father who sired was the sole originator, the female merely nourishing in her womb the seed that the male had planted therein. Thus traditional ideas about authority were linked with a patriarchal metaphor, which in turn was supported by a mistaken biological theory. The cluster of ideas involved in these formulations was of immense power and importance, underlying as it does both patriarchy and monarchy, and much of theology. The author, then, was fully entitled to respect, gratitude, and implicit obedience within his domain and from his offspring. He was expected to lay down the law, and he had the right to be believed and obeyed.¹⁶⁹

As applied to a text, these ideas suggest that the author is the best authority to consult about the true meaning of his own work, for the author's creative will is the true and original determinant of meaning, and every sort of literary scholar must therefore seek to discover what the author originally meant to say at the time the work was composed. Within any institutional context, be it a church (or other religious congregational venue), a lecture room, a playhouse, or a courtroom, truth is sought by returning to a founding origin. Inquiry is thus oriented toward a "primitive" Golden Age when truth was uncontaminated, meanings clearly defined, and the law universally obeyed. This is sometimes called "the myth of the normative origin," and it has had a wide-ranging influence, not only upon scholarly and interpretative practice, but also upon political theory and religious history.¹⁷⁰

Even to the present day and in the most liberal of Western democracies, it is still assumed that the authority of parents over their children is nearly absolute. The notion of children's rights remains relatively undeveloped. Parents still often have the rights, for example, to determine the religious education of their children and to inflict corporal punishment upon them, and parenthood has long supplied metaphors for the exercise of absolute authority. It is somehow inconceivable that there should be any appeal against man's understanding of God's judgement, or that the earthly king could be charged with breaking his own law; and both were therefore spoken of as "fathers."¹⁷¹

So, there has been a very long tradition of linking the concept of authority, its invocation, its justification, and its exercise with theology, with patriarchy, and with monarchical structures in society. God has been seen in the image of a Roman *paterfamilias* or an absolute monarch, and much of religious Western language and symbolism, ever since the Book of Job, has appeared to say that human beings can have no *locus standi* from which they might be able to challenge or question the wisdom of man's interpretation of God's decrees. Even today it is still possible for a few ultraconservative Jews, Christians, and "Muslims" to argue that popular participation in the decision-making process is incompatible with scripture, and not viable as a political theory. This may be the historical reality; however, the cumulative scriptural experience suggests that participatory popular politics in the end traces all ultimate decisions and strategies back to a consensus of sorts that does not conflict with the eternal facts of scripture and that is simultaneously in an evolving mode pertaining to the intellectually inviting matters of scripture.¹⁷²

The grand European break from the oppressive authority of the Church placed all things "religious," "theological," or "scriptural" in the realm of accusations and suspicion. The kings of Mediterranean antiquity traced their descent from gods, and the pope derived his authority from God's commissioning of Christ and Christ's commissioning of Peter and his successors. Constitutional lawyers and scriptural exegetes alike sought for the original and therefore

authoritative and founding meaning of the texts with which they were concerned.¹⁷³

It is as if both civil and religious societies were seen as descent-groups, lineages that can be traced back to one or more founding fathers who gave people the law. Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha* (1860) traced the divine right of kings back to the authority God gave Adam (ﷺ) over his children. Where people have thought in this manner, the task of any reformer would have been to remove secondary corruption and restore primitive purity. And this is what has typically motivated the people to dream of getting back to the good old days when God was close, everyone practiced the virtues, and the king was a father to his people.¹⁷⁴

Those good old days in a church-centered Europe, however, were evidently gone at the dawn of the European Enlightenment. God was no longer present in person to give immediate guidance. It was therefore usually held that God had appointed some subordinate authority or “vicar” to act on His behalf. This delegate revealed or interpreted God's will, and administered God's law, thereby executing divine justice. Such authorities included God's eternal “Word incarnate,” the Word written in the scriptures, those who copy, study, and preach the text of the scriptures, and the priestly ruling class in the Church.¹⁷⁵

The philosophical chain of authority that underlies this sequence has become clearly understood only recently in the West. There are four levels. The prime or founding authority is the creative will of the author, in which he acts to express his will. This creative self-expression is then clothed in spoken words, which are faithfully recorded by amanuenses (secretaries) in a written text. Fourth and finally, the student of the written word seeks the singular interpretation of it that is closest to the author's original mind. The order, then, is mental intention, spoken utterance, written text, and interpretation.¹⁷⁶

The subordinate authorities so far mentioned (scriptures, scribes, priests, etc.) may be compared with similar authorities in the state: the legislature, the law, lawyers, judges, and so forth. These are all “external authorities.” In addition there is within

each person's heart the "internal authority" of conscience, a sense of vocation, private judgement, the inward testimony of the "Holy Spirit" and so on. The importance of internal authority is recognized both by the state and by the church, including specifically the Roman Catholic Church. In Catholic moral teaching, conscience must always be obeyed, even when its deliverance is at variance with the objectively-valid and correct line taught by the Church. For instance, if one has carefully ascertained and weighed the Church's teaching, and yet still finds himself in conscientious disagreement with it, then he is described as being in a state of "invincible ignorance," that is, he must follow his conscience, but shall not sin by doing so. With this in mind, it is not quite correct to call the Roman Catholic system "authoritarian." Certainly, painful conflicts between individual judgement and church authority can and do arise; but the individual's freedom of conscience is not in the end overridden — or, at least, it should not be. Similarly, the state — at least where it is fairly stable and confident — permits the individual some rights of conscientious objection to active military service, or to participating in a surgical termination of pregnancy, for example.¹⁷⁷

One further strand of traditional ideas about authority should be mentioned. Until about the time of Georg Hegel (1770–1831), Western thinkers generally believed in an objective Order of Reason, Plato's "noumenal" world, in which were vested the unchanging moral and intellectual standards by which human life must at all times and in all places be guided. This belief in objective norms, called *realism* by philosophers, is referred to as "belief in absolutes" or "objective certainties" by ordinary people. It began to break down in the 19th century as people came to recognize that historical change, cultural diversity, and the conditioning of thought by language are not as shallow as once believed, but actually rather deep. To the new Enlightenment philosophers, all human standards were immanent (occurring entirely within the mind), and subject to change, despite the fact that most purportedly authoritative teachers of beliefs and values, faith and morals, had claimed to be in touch with and to represent an unchanging and superhuman order. In a

word, the latter were all Platonists, because they had taught belief in timeless truths and values “out there,” a belief that was widely questioned by the new philosophy of the Enlightenment.¹⁷⁸

Since the Enlightenment, indeed, all the ideas about authority so far discussed have been subjected to sustained attack. The major lines of criticism start, firstly, with Rene Descartes (1596–1650) and his successors, who introduced a new method of doubt and a critical style of thinking.¹⁸⁰ Like a customs officer demanding that all baggage be opened for inspection, the European Enlightenment refused to allow any beliefs to be exempt on the grounds of their being traditional, revealed, mysterious, or precious. All beliefs had to be exposed to the searching eye of reason to have their credentials examined. Although Descartes himself prudently refrained from using his method to question authority in the Church and the state, there were many others who had no such scruples. Inevitably, critical thinking and the method of doubt have progressively undermined all traditional ideas of authority in Europe, until it seems that modern society has nothing left to appeal to beyond the consensus of expert testimony and the measurement of public opinion.¹⁷⁹

Even that, however, is something of a broken reed, for a second line of criticism of authority, also strongly emphasized in the European Enlightenment, makes a very sharp distinction between is and ought, fact and value, and indicative and imperative. From the fact that a certain authority commands one to believe or to do something, it does not follow that he ought to believe or obey, unless he has independent grounds for thinking that this authority deserves to be trusted or to be obeyed. But continually demanding that every authority (or expert opinion, or public sentiment) thus validate itself is systematically to undermine precisely its authority.¹⁸⁰

The third criticism of established notions of social and religious authority is at least as old as Herodotus. The exercise of authority ordinarily requires there to be an unchanging order of truth and values. But it has long been recognized that what people count as being true and ethically precious varies, sometimes very greatly, from one society to another, and in different historical periods. In recent thought there have been strong currents of anti-

platonism, anti-realism, and historical relativism. These doctrines are hard to state without appearing to claim for them precisely the kind of truth that they deny; but this difficulty is (supposedly) avoided by some, who seek to write the history of systems of thought in as cool and positivistic a manner as possible. Systems of thought, beliefs, and values are described, and their changes reported, in a manner that can only be called “Martian,” and which inevitably robs them of any authority they might otherwise be felt to have had for human beings.¹⁸¹

The fourth line of criticism stems from the contemporary feminist movement. Feminist writers have argued that a great deal, which in the past was portrayed as being natural and part of the entrenched order of things, should rather be seen as culturally-established and changeable. Feminist ideologue, Simone de Beauvoir, best put this notion into words, “One is not born, but is made, a woman.” Females are in bondage to cultural stereotypes that have been imposed upon them. Feminists further point out the strikingly “masculinist” character of traditional ideas of reason and authority. The exemplars of reason and authority, to a startling degree, tend to be masculine authorities who have no consort, that is, lines of unmarried male philosophers and popes. It is suggested that such figures symbolize the masculine principle’s total victory over nature, the passions, and everything else that is symbolically feminine and therefore irrational and supposedly in need of being governed. Only with Hegel does a more dialectical and heterosexual style of thinking begin to replace the older patriarchal monarchy. The “other” — that is, woman — is no longer merely ruled; she begins to make an active contribution to the formation and the process of the world.¹⁸²

Finally, during the past century or so there has been something of a discovery of interpretation as being in some sense ubiquitous, and as a creative activity. The theater director and the orchestral conductor have become important cultural figures. The reading or performance of any work is no longer seen as a simple repetition of the founding meaning imposed upon it by its original creator. Rather, any reading or performance is always an interpretation.

The task of the director, conductor, preacher, or (indeed) believer is always to reimagine the text by finding a new way of reading it that will bring it to life in a new way for a new generation. And this new understanding of the necessity for creative reinterpretation has destroyed the old belief in an original authority's intent as the true and authoritative meaning of any work. There is no way to get back to such an original meaning, and in any case, trying to do so is counterproductive as there is no original scripture in the Judeo-Christian context. The original scripture was never preserved. And, thus, humanity has had to and continues to have to tolerate the upheavals, the ups-and-downs, and the criticism and rejection of all authority as understood through the remnants of scripture still in Judeo-Christian possession.¹⁸³

In light of all these lines of criticism it is hardly surprising that so many people today will accept the moral authority of, for example, the pope only when he tells them what they already believe. As for the authority of the civil law, its intellectual basis is distinctly uncertain: in Britain (1991–1993), politicians were urging people to obey the law and pay a tax, the community charge or “poll tax,” even though the very same politicians had already acknowledged that the introduction of the tax had been an error and were pledged to abolish it.¹⁸⁴

What ideas of authority then remain to the human crowd? In some instances authority may be defended as a necessary myth, and justified on utilitarian grounds. The rank and file seem willing also to ascribe some authority to people of outstanding gifts or creative and interpretative powers. Fortunately or unfortunately, some people still seem to be willing to support leaders whose exercise of secular authority is constitutional, open to inspection, and responsive to the movement of public opinion.¹⁸⁵ Presumably, the transparent exercise of constitutional authority with due representation of all major constituencies would be the ideal course of action, however such an ideal can only be attained if, and only if, Allah's (ﷻ) overarching authority is respected and honored. In practice, especially in the material, “democratic” world, constitutional frameworks have become the exploitable “futures” and “options” of

special interest lobbies that manipulate bribable (immoral) politicians into executing policies directed at depositing the “wealth of nations” into the personal accounts of corporate CEOs, chief executives, presidents, prime ministers, and kings.

It is impossible to provide a summary bibliography of a topic so vast and so wide ranging. Interested readers may wish to pursue the themes sketched above by studying the histories of the papacy, biblical criticism, political theory, jurisprudence, ethics, free thought, literary theory, or philosophy. Among thinkers who have made a significant contribution to the debate, John Stuart Mill, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida come to mind. On the conservative side, the names of Michael Oakeshott and Alasdair MacIntyre are often quoted.¹⁸⁶

The above pussyfooting around the meaning of authority is bound to happen to any philosopher or civilization that has lost touch with Allah (ﷻ) as man’s only authority,

Say, “Am I to take for my superior [authority] anyone but Allah, the Originator of the heavens and earth, when it is He [alone] who feeds and Himself is not fed?” Say, “I am entreated to be first among those who surrender themselves [unto Allah], and not to be among those who ascribe divine authority to any beside Him” (6:14).

This is the strong logic of creation, nature, and the way the world is. Who is the authority, who has the right to exercise authority, who is in control, and who influences the cosmic and microscopic systems of life that are at work? To whom does authority belong, if not to the Maker and Conceiver of the heavens and earth; the One who invented and brought life and existence into being? Who is man’s authority, if not Allah (ﷻ) who gives, feeds, and sustains human life and the lives of everything in need of nourishment and sustenance? How can people, societies, philosophers, or scholars listen to or obey authorities in the form of individuals who themselves need maintenance and upkeep, and bread and butter?

The next *āyah* adds more substantiation, “Say, ‘I have been told to be the first to defer [to Allah] and not be of the *mushriks*.’” Referring to and yielding to Allah (ﷻ) is a way of eroding and dispelling *shirk*. This is accomplished by refusing to correspond others with Allah in His authority and dominance. Drawing a comparison between Allah (ﷻ) and anyone else in matters of authority, sovereignty, and control of things large and small is tantamount to *shirk*. Islam and *shirk* are exclusive; one cannot be a developing Muslim and a confirmed *mushrik* at the same time. This is the core of the issue — an issue that worldly authorities, material and secular, have carefully shrouded from public attention so as to force populations, civilizations, and centuries of human beings to obey them instead of Allah (ﷻ), the undivided and indivisible authority over everything and forever.

This is the central bone of contention around which struggles begin and end. It is because of Allah’s (ﷻ) authority that man has inherited the accounts of struggling, striving, and fighting prophets. Muhammad (ﷺ) stood firm, held his ground, and did not compromise on principle when he refused to negotiate away Allah’s (ﷻ) authority with the *mushriks* in Makkah first, and then in the whole world beyond. These *mushriks* who exercised their own ungodly authority wanted some room for negotiations, talks, and deliberations on this issue of Allah’s (ﷻ) authority. They wanted to find room in the Islamic order for their own gods and (temporal) authorities. They were even willing to become ritualistic Muslims if only there was some Islamic “understanding” of their legislative priorities or the status of their influential decision-makers. Thus, they wanted to keep for themselves their own — or much of their own — authority provided no one breached their prerogatives, privileges, and preemptory positions. Of course, first and foremost on their minds was maintaining their own legal system. If Muhammad (ﷺ) and those “radical” Muslims with him could accept such an accommodation, then these *mushriks* in Makkah and its vicinity would stop their harassment campaign and put an end to their military opposition. And if Muhammad (ﷺ) was willing to pare down his Islam to adapt to their status quo as defined by the order of their urgency

and control, then he would be given the chance to become their chieftain and leader, not to mention, rich, as a consequence. They would even guarantee that he would become a man of luxury and lavishness like none other around.

These were true politicians, as they knew how to deploy a bribe for the purpose of delegitimizing principle. In unison, they were extending a hand of reconciliation on their terms to the Prophet (ﷺ) while simultaneously raising their swords and clenching their fists in a display of hostility and belligerence. It is in this atmosphere and within the details of these dynamics that these instructions come to Allah's Prophet (ﷺ), telling him to foreswear and condemn their conniving contrivance. This prophetic response, recorded in the decisive words of the Qur'an, was clear, direct, and final,

Say, "Behold, I would dread, were I [thus] to renounce allegiance to my Sustainer, the suffering [that would befall me] on that stunning Day [of Judgement]." Whoever has been dispelled [of the anguish] on that Day has been graced [by Allah]: and that is a demonstrable triumph (6:15–16).

This is it: the fear of disobeying Allah (ﷻ). One can disobey anyone who is in disobedience of Allah, and one can obey anyone who is in obedience of Allah, but one cannot disobey Allah (ﷻ) even as everyone else is disobeying Him. This relationship of obedience that comes from affirming Allah's (ﷻ) authority is what distinguishes today's committed Muslims from all other scriptural claimants. Among Muslims, it is clearly the secular ones who have violated this integral and central feature of Islam. Of course, people who plan a lifetime of thorough and undiluted obedience to Allah (ﷻ) have their doubts and fears. Some may think they will lose their status, others feel they will have to forfeit their fortunes, and yet others believe they will become an underclass. However, Allah (ﷻ) knows this is what is going to come to man's mind,

And if Allah should bear upon you with misfortune, there is none who could remove it but He; and if He should impact you with good fortune, it is He who has the power to will anything: for He alone holds sway over His creatures, and He alone is the Truly Wise, the All-Aware (6:17–18).

It should be sufficient for the committed Muslims to be armed with this accurate God-given information presented in the Qur’an as a preparatory step to engaging the real world, not fearing what may happen to them as they decide to obey Allah (ﷻ) alone while, by necessity, disobeying His enemies and detractors.

And this leads to the concluding *āyah* of this lesson,

Say, “What could most significantly bear witness to the truth?” Say, “Allah is witness between me and you; and this Qur’an has been revealed to me so that on the strength thereof I might warn you and all whom it may reach.” Could you in truth bear witness that there are other deities [of authority] side by side with Allah? Say, “I bear no [such] witness!” Say, “He is the One God; and, behold, far be it from me to ascribe divinity [with authority], as you do, to any beside Him!” (6:19).

Here, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) leads the human effort of breaking from these *mushriks*, putting them on notice, and challenging them because they refuse in psychological and military terms to accede to the authority of Allah (ﷻ). He did not negotiate away his position or his principle concerning the sole authority of the singular Sustainer — Allah (ﷻ). The Prophet’s (ﷺ) steadfastness demonstrates that Islam (the obedience of Allah) and *shirk* (the obedience of His temporal rivals) cannot be combined in one heart. There are those with Islamic identity cards who think they can owe their allegiance to Allah (ﷻ) and to Satan at the same time. They believe they can obey Allah and court Caesar without contradictions. They assume they can have a heavenly

deity (without worldly authority) and worldly authorities (without divine attributes) all at the same time, while doing religious justice to whomever is in heaven and civil justice to whomever is in government or in the courts. This is where they and the things they manage have gone terribly wrong.

The Apostle of Allah (ﷺ) is not some ordinary person. He was the one who was commissioned to spell out this lesson very clearly to the *mushriks* of his time and the *mushriks* of all times. There is a world of a difference between the *dīn* of Allah (ﷻ) and the *dīn* of *mushriks*. The gap between *tawhīd* and *shirk* is unbridgeable. There is no common ground between Islam and *jāhiliyah*. Therefore, what is there to talk about when the differences are so stark? When it comes to the issue of authority, people either accept Allah (ﷻ) as their one and only authority or they accede to any number of other authorities claiming to be on par with Him or in exclusion of Him; whichever direction that goes in, the outcome will be a *dīn* of *shirk*.

It is in this context that the Qur’anic question is asked, **“Say, ‘What could most conspicuously bear witness to the truth?’”** Who in existence is the most substantial witness to the facts? Whose testimony supersedes all other testimonies? Whose witness carries the most weight? The Prophet (ﷺ) was ordered to pose the above question; and equally so, he was ordered to divulge the answer, **“Say, ‘Allah...’”** Indeed, Allah (ﷻ) is the most substantial, meaningful, and appreciable of all witnesses. When He speaks His words and states His case, then this is the final word and the conclusive argument. Nothing else need be said after He speaks.

Once this fact of Allah’s (ﷻ) oneness coupled with the credibility of His testimony is affirmed, then the Qur’an declares that He is the witness between Muhammad (ﷺ) and his opponents in this whole affair, **“Say, ‘Allah is witness between me and you...’”** This godly testimony and evidence is presented in the context of Muhammad (ﷺ) himself spending a lifetime in establishing the *dīn* of Allah (ﷻ), and of the Qur’an being an open book for all to read and understand. On matters of authority, this Qur’an and this Prophet (ﷺ) are the touchstone and the criterion.

“And this Qur’an has been revealed to me so that on the strength thereof I might warn you and all whom it may reach.” The Qur’an was revealed for all humanity, and thus it has to reach them all. Its strength is its discernment and wisdom. All those who understand its meanings can expect to be answerable as to how and why they reacted or responded to it. The Qur’an is a word of advice and admonition to common people, clans of people, clubs of people, and communities of people. If a decision is made to ignore or object to it after its contents and context have been understood, then the results may be devastating. There are people in the world who cannot understand the meaning of the Qur’an because they are not conversant with its language. Such will be exempt from the consequences of declining it; however, in this case, the burden is ever more profound and yet onerous upon those who themselves are familiar with its language and attuned to its meanings.

When justifications are given in international forums and international courts for the supremacy of temporal authorities, the sovereignty of man over man, or the authority of ideologies and militaries over the authority of Allah (ﷻ), then it becomes incumbent upon His folks, His people, and His constituents to oppose these false authorities, to take issue with their counterfeit laws, and to deconstruct their spurious legal systems. This is the time to declare the exclusive authority of Allah (ﷻ) as well as His designated control of the affairs of man,

Could you in truth bear witness that there are other deities/authorities side by side with Allah? Say, “I bear no [such] witness!” Say, “He is the One [authoritative] God; and, behold, far be it from me to ascribe divinity/authority, as you do, to any beside Him!” (6:19).

This is a serious matter of conflict in human societies, and it reaches a pinnacle when the people of God within a society stand up and take on the political, judicial, legislative, executive, and corporate components therein with a view to delegitimizing them and what they stand for as antagonistic to God and His authority.

Al-Kalbī chronicles an incident in which the tribal chiefs of Makkah said to Muhammad (ﷺ),

O Muhammad! We see no one [of significance] endorsing what you say about this divine mission of yours. We asked the Jews and the Christians about you, and they claim that you have no mention or description in their [holy] books. So could you tell us who will testify that you are a Messenger [from Allah], as you claim?

So Allah (ﷻ) revealed this *āyah*, “Say, ‘Allah is witness between me and you..’”¹⁸⁷ Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and others have reported that the *mushriks* inquired of the Prophet (ﷺ), “Who bears witness that you are the Messenger of Allah?” And then, it is said, the above *āyah* was revealed.¹⁸⁸

Exclusion of Islam from the Information Age

This Qur’anic wave of instructions requires more attention from the committed Muslims because it crests on *walā’* (authority affiliation), *tawḥīd* (the singularity of Allah (ﷻ) as deity and authority), and *mufaṣṣalah* (the differentiation of Muslims from *mushriks*). Today the vanguard Islamic movement is up against the same constricters of God who have littered the history of scripture with their bellicose attitudes and bloody policies. Today, people have once again regressed to pre-scriptural times. The residents of this planet are currently in a state of mind that resembles the prevalent attitude at the time this Qur’an was revealed. Islam and the Qur’an unfolded in the time of Muhammad (ﷺ) in one sentence, that is, the affirmation of Allah’s (ﷻ) deity/authority: *lā ilāha illā Allāh*.

When Islam became a rising phenomenon in the later years of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) mission in Madinah, this was expressed by Rab‘ī ibn ‘Āmir, the emissary of the commander of the Islamic forces to Rostam, the Persian commander. The latter asked the former, “What brings you [the Muslims] here [to Persia]?” Ibn ‘Āmir replied with the following words,

Allah has dispatched us so that we may [help] extricate whom He wills from a world conforming to human beings to a conformity with Allah alone, and to take such a person(s) out of the phobia of this world and into the wide scope of this world and the coming one, and from the oppression of religions into the justice of Islam.¹⁸⁹

Ibn 'Āmir knew very well that Rustam did not worship the king of Persia as a deity or a creator of this world; no one there was involved in religious rituals rendered unto the king of Persia. The issue at hand was that the Persian people were subjects of a legal system devised and administered by such a king and his court. This civil obedience was in contradiction to Allah's (ﷻ) authority. Thus Ibn 'Āmir informed Rustam that the Muslims were on a mission to help people rid themselves of tyrannical and earthly governmental, legal, and political systems in which some people are gods and others are slaves. These subjects of the king needed help to affirm the authority of Allah (ﷻ) and total obedience to Him — “religious” and “civil.” This is what became the *dīn* (social justice convention) of Islam.

Today humanity has gone back to square one. People in the world are enslaved by corporate gods, military deities, and capitalistic authorities. These people are obeying someone, and that someone is not God. Their religions of rituals offer a convenient cover for this shameful status quo. They need to listen to and understand what *lā ilāha illā Allāh* means and tries to achieve. The irony and sarcasm is that there are “Muslims” who loudly enunciate *lā ilāha illā Allāh*, but they do so like empty drums. Their article of faith (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*) has lost its original meaning and its forceful thrust.

In the way it ought to be, when Muslims understand, express, and accomplish *lā ilāha illā Allāh*, they will consider all forms of secular and materialistic establishments, systems, governments, and institutions to be illegal and illegitimate. There is nothing divine about earthly regimes, nothing sacred about worldly authorities, nothing holy about materialistic ideologies, and nothing sacrosanct about secular administrations. As far as the Muslims who honor

Muhammad (ﷺ) as their guiding light are concerned, they all have to be dis-established, deconstructed, and dismantled. It is no stretch to say that the whole world is in political chaos; it has experimented with authoritarian, free-market, and socialistic governments, yet it still bounces from one generation of confusion to a succeeding one of more disarray and dubiousness.

If the current Islamic movement and revival cannot pull the Muslim masses out of their apathy and inertia, then this Qur'an and Prophet (ﷺ) will be an indictment against the failures of these supine "Muslim" leaders. Today's Muslims need to take a hard look at this *āyah*,

Say, "Am I to take for my *walī* (political superior) anyone but Allah, the Originator of the heavens and earth, when it is He who provides food and is not provided with food?" Say, "I have been commanded to be the first who submits [to His authority]; and be not of the *mushriks*" (6:14).

In the modern world, the "Muslims" are guilty and dishonored because they no longer consider Allah (ﷻ) to be their *walī*. Instead of obeying Him, showing Him they honor their oath of loyalty to Him, and asking only Him for support, these "Muslims" forget about their commitments, acting in disregard of these values, concepts, and principles.

The Islamic movement in all its localities, organizations, affiliations, networks, and reserves has to understand the task that beckons it: to bring about a fundamental transition in the political structure of the world through the rebirth of its populations on account of their own volition to honor the authority of God alone. This is not about executing some kind of planetary coup d'état, nor is it about Muslim armies imposing Islam by force upon other people. Rather, it is about the right of access of Muslims to the peoples of the world so that the explicit meanings of this open Book (the guiding Qur'an) can be explained to them. This was never an easy task, nor will it be tomorrow.

Islam has always been, as a matter of deliberate policies and thought-out strategies, intentionally excluded from the attention of the world public. Throughout the 20th century, the economic system of the United States has been evolving toward the production and distribution of information and away from that of material goods. In fact, the United States is now recognized, and has been since the 1970s, as an information society, that is, the US economy now primarily produces and distributes information, and the bulk of its labor force works in information-oriented occupations. Within the frameworks of capitalism and industrialism, the information society has brought changes in all areas of social life, from private to public, and from personal to political. Yet in this advanced state of information circulation, Islam does not see the light of day — and if it does, then in a distorted image.

In the first decades of the 20th century, organizational experts mastered the secrets of running large corporations and governments. They did so by inventing a system dependent on communications technologies and bureaucratic techniques, in order to ensure the smooth and timely flow of information among staffs, departments, and decision makers. When successfully implemented, these advances allowed institutions to grow to unprecedented sizes. The rise of big government, with its threat to the privacy of citizens and potential for controlling their lives, represents the best-known political consequence of this wave of the information revolution. As may be observed in George Orwell's classic political novel, *1984*, a government's capacity for domination depends on sophisticated communications systems.¹⁹⁰ But in comparison with Orwell's Oceania, government today appears less monolithic and omnipotent. Moreover, journalists have actively documented government abuses of communications technology, so that Orwell's warning appears less shocking to contemporary citizens who are naturally skeptical of government's intentions. And still, even with such aggressive journalism, Islam in its accurate meaning and full scope is still off the public radar.

The evolution of the information society has consequences both for popular institutions and for private citizens. Because the

socioeconomic patterns associated with these tendencies have been identified most clearly in the United States, much of the data on the subject refer to the American experience. However, because the rise of an information society in the United States catalyzed the growth of global communications networks and information markets, developments in an international context cannot be ignored.¹⁹¹

Increasing recognition, in the years following WWII, of the commercial value of information intensified a transformation of the US economy that had been under way throughout most of the 20th century. In the early-1960s, the economic exchange of information probably accounted for 30% of the Gross National Product, and by 1990 approached 50%. In a significant way, the modern US economy spends its resources producing and distributing information. Where early-20th-century workers sold the labor of their hands in fields and factories, late-20th-century workers mostly sell the labor of their brains. Approximately half of all workers in the United States hold occupations in the information sector, and similar tendencies can be observed in countries such as France, Britain, Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, and Singapore. However in all of the information explosion in these countries, there is a hidden hand that ensures no information passes around and flows freely concerning Islam as it was presented by the Prophet (ﷺ) and the Qur'an. Instead the airwaves are bursting with screeds on "Islamic terrorism," and the age-old canards about "Islamic fundamentalism."¹⁹²

Early studies of the information society emphasized new developments apparently leading to a post-industrial society. However, many scholars now see the information society as deeply rooted in the historic growth of capitalism and in the expansion of industrialization. According to this interpretation, the information society is seen as a continuation of the social forces that forged industrial capitalism in the United States. The shift from agriculture, to industrial and then to information work took place well before WWII. In other words, changes in the economy and in the labor force that led to the information society were well under way before the computer revolution. So if what seems like newsworthy information is tied

down to capitalist and corporate interests, it becomes obvious why there is no interest in presenting the facts about Islam.¹⁹³

The steady evolution of an information environment has revolved around the mass media, information technologies, and information work. In the United States, capitalism allowed for an unplanned proliferation of commercial communication channels. These variegated channels structure private life and become the major source of personal participation in the political process. Certainly, in the United States, the people's view of national politics and issues is almost totally constrained by the commercial media. Moreover, in those countries where a significant portion of adults labor as information workers, they may develop a heightened sensitivity to information, and to the value of information, leading to a perception of the popular process as an information process. Thus, the products of capitalism and the realities of information work may converge in powerful ways to create new attitudes toward political life. This is what ought to spur enlightened and committed Muslims to realize why no information about an Islam of justice makes its way without prejudice into the mass media.¹⁹⁴

Because the television networks are profit-making organizations, they must adhere to the calculus of commercial news production. The networks minimize costs by maintaining news crews in the largest US cities where, they reason, news stories are most likely to occur. In addition, they seek out scheduled events that can be planned into the day's production decisions. For its part, government speaks the language of big media by crafting messages to conform to the constraints of televised news production. By relying on pseudo-events, big media and big government have turned news conferences and presidents into the premier news stories of the public agenda. Indeed, the commercial and competitive nature of the mass media encourages reliance on politically managed news events and focusing on political personalities. Like entertainment programming, the news is made attractive to the largest number of viewers. Furthermore, national networks typically focus on news stories at the national level, while local stations concentrate attention on the largest city in the media market. Consequently, members of the audience,

already receiving little information about complex national issues, receive even less about local issues. Residents of the New York metropolitan area, for example, express greater familiarity with the mayor of New York City than with the mayors of their own home towns. The result is low levels of political knowledge. And with all the money, resources, and finances available to Muslims — if they were in possession of their own wealth — they are still consumers of this type of information instead of being producers of information that is not corporate-sensitive or commercially controlled.¹⁹⁵

However, one countercurrent is visible. The mass communication of political news seems to be changing in response to the proliferation of cable systems, satellite networks, and the internet. *Cable News Network (CNN)*, for example, was among the first to offer foreign news organizations the opportunity to present news stories directly to US audiences. The availability of political news produced according to different cultural assumptions challenges some of the journalistic conventions created by the networks. Moreover, because of its reciprocation policy, *CNN* has reached viewers in numerous countries including the former communist bloc in the world. If *CNN* can do that, it is only a matter of time before information becomes channeled through less controlled mechanisms. And so, the beginning of an information deluge of diversity may be on the horizon. Despite these opportunities, the Islamic movement in the world does not have a strong foothold in this arena. To be sure, there are satellite channels like *al-Manār*, *al-Ālam*, and (with reservations) *al-Jazīrah* that may be heralding a breakthrough, which will make it possible for the Islamic point of view, Islamic analyses, and the Islamic worldview to be broadcast to a potential world audience. Even with all that, the Muslims would still be playing catch-up, as they need their own independent satellites in space so as to be free of the terms, stipulations, and conditions that may be imposed on them by those who cannot stand to hear or watch the Islamic viewpoint.¹⁹⁶

Because marketing strategy dictates that successful vendors identify discrete market segments and package their product to appeal to the characteristics of one or more segments, the media en-

vironment is characterized by a host of programmers, advertisers, publishers, editors, announcers — and a few politicians — competing for the attention of the targeted segments. Contrary to the nation-as-community image depicted during election years, the audience presents a highly fragmented appearance to the message producer. From the point of view of the individual, these integrated markets appear as a blizzard of commercial messages with a few political communications nearly lost in the storm. Moreover, commercial messages dominate the media environment, in quantity and quality. They contribute to the formation of a consumer culture of great power, precisely because individuals derive from it their knowledge of the world beyond their own personal experience. Indeed, most adults in the United States spend as many hours with the mass media as they do at work, while their children spend more hours watching television than attending school. These patterns appear to extend to other industrial countries as well. For the individual in the information society, information overload generated by consumer culture requires coping skills of a considerably high order. And here again, many decent Muslims are unaware they are consuming information — and not just any information but that which is tailored to the priorities of the market and the interests of the ruling and financial classes.¹⁹⁷

Consumer culture encourages individuals to meet their needs by purchasing products. It neither advocates community values, nor cultivated public discourse with other members of the community. It promotes individualistic purchasing of products and further consumption of commercial media. Consumer culture also influences the form, rhetoric, assumptions, and taboos of all public political discussion, so that political communications have gradually taken on the forms of commercial media, looking and feeling more like commercial ads. The tendency of political candidates in a consumer culture is to adapt the patterns of consumer culture to their political ends. Thus politicians tend to be marketed like commercial products. So powerful is consumer culture that political candidates either conform or risk losing contact with voters. Is it conceivable that this commercial locomotive will permit the Islamic imperative

of justice onto its tracks? In this overly commercialized culture, "Islam does not sell."¹⁹⁸

When individuals substitute consumer behavior for public political behavior, they bring the identity of the fragmented audience to the political arena. Fragmentation leads to a narrow conceptualization of the political agenda, encouraging single-issue interest and voting. The pervasiveness of messages delivered by big media establishes a daily environment of information overload. Not only must citizens be alert to the occasional political message, but they must also contend with the obstacle of sheer volume when they choose to speak out. With a few exceptions, political discourse never takes center stage. The forms of commercial media define the audience's expectations and have come to dominate political communication. Neither commercial nor political messages stress the interrelationship between issues that underlie the political agenda. From the perception of the audience, the media environment appears as a rush of discrete products. In other words, the media encourages individuals to approach the political agenda as a lineup of unconnected issues. Not surprisingly, candidates face a multitude of single-issue voters. This is yet another explanation of why Islam is taboo in the media, for Islam is not a one-issue subject. And even if it was, the last issue the media and its commercial handlers would want to tackle is the authority of Allah (ﷻ).¹⁹⁹

Furthermore, fragmentation leads to withdrawal from political parties and from the political agenda of one's group. As consumerism and fragmentation replace participation in political life, political and consumer choices seem of equal importance. By choosing politicians and groceries according to the same consumer paradigm, individuals force political candidates to take a marketing approach to further political values. Given the struggle of political communicators to be heard through the blizzard of commercial messages, it is easy to imagine a fragmented electorate leading to a fragmented political order. Erosion at the base leaves the populist political process vulnerable. At this level, commercialism voluntarily seeps into the public psyche, and for reasons of materialism and greed, political priorities begin to look as if they are "ideals" or "utopian."²⁰⁰

To be sure, low rates of voting indicate a level of disinterest in the electoral process, while high involvement with media demonstrates acceptance of the behavior patterns that go with consumer culture. However, fragmentation does not deny the desire for community nor the desire for dialogue. As social, family, and political attachments weaken, individuals achieve interconnectedness through the use of communications technologies. Increasingly, consumer-industrial-technological societies live in communities structured by communications networks. These communities exist as connections without the geographic structures of village or town life. Indeed, in a highly mobile population, the nuclear family stays “together” through frequent telephone calls, shared audio-cassettes and video-cassettes, and letters, even though actual physical contact seldom occurs. Studies of technology and society have drawn attention to network communities among computer programmers and specialists, emphasizing the special attachments formed by individuals who are not in physical contact. That they potentially challenge centralized elites — both governmental and corporate — leads to a proliferation of networks (not all electronic) that generate communities whose cohesiveness lies in identification with the values shared by other members of the network. With their latent political muscle, it may even be that network communities constitute the basis for new political agendas. Possibly they are the source of a new political force within the information society. As such, network communities constitute both a response to fragmentation and a reification (regarding something abstract as being a real thing) of fragmentation. They are communities of communication. However, in none of these network communities is the Qur’an present. Islamic parties, Islamic institutions, and Muslim countries have not tried to communicate the message of the Qur’an through these channels of communication and with this sophisticated *modus operandi*.²⁰¹

Over the past few decades, it has become apparent that politically motivated interconnectedness is not limited to the industrialized countries. Followers of Imam Khomeini delivered his message by distributing hundreds of thousands of audio-cassettes and created

a movement against the Shah of Iran. During what is called the democracy movement in the Spring of 1989, dissenting Chinese students maintained contact with the outside world by communicating on many of the 30,000 fax machines available through private businesses. In Latin America, localized media have played critical roles in establishing the legitimacy of every group seeking to control government. For example, during the “Cuban Revolution,” *Radio Rebelde*, a portable radio station hidden in the mountains of Oriente Province, kept the voice of Castro alive, demonstrating the seriousness of his claim to the leadership of the country. Similar low-power stations in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua have supported rebel groups’ efforts to win the support of the people. Politically motivated people will utilize whatever information technologies they can access, no matter how complex the technology, no matter how underdeveloped the country. The absence of any work on behalf of Islamic organizations and associations to get involved in communicating the authority of Allah (ﷻ) through the mass media, or to explain the struggle of the committed Muslims nowadays through the technological means available raises the question of either a tonnage of ignorance lodged inside the leadership positions of these Islamic organizations or their toeing the line of certain governments and authorities who do not want this type of Qur’anic communication to fill the air-waves.²⁰²

The tendency toward big news organizations and integrated information markets dominated by a few corporations continues to emerge along with fragmented media environments and communities of communication exploiting small media for political purposes. Integration and fragmentation represent two sides of the same need — to communicate in order to exercise power. However, although the tendency is easily documented, the consequences are not. Concern for the consequences of integration prompted a coalition of developing nations to challenge US dominance of world media markets as constituting cultural domination and a threat to the national sovereignty of those nations where US firms controlled large shares of media markets. From the mid-1970s, United Nations agencies became arenas for opposing US policies. The Mass Media

Draft Declaration (UNESCO, 1976), the Interim Report of the Commission on Communication Problems (UNESCO, 1978), and the MacBride Commission Report (Paris, 1980) argued that the hegemonic nature of US capitalism threatened small nations. The United States, with occasional European support, countered that the dominant role played by the US in the integration of world media markets resulted from the natural workings of the international marketplace for information. Increased polarization and conflict in the 1980s led to US withdrawal from UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization). Neither side disputed the facts with respect to integration. They quarreled over differing interpretations of the consequences. No similar debate concerning the consequences of fragmentation has taken place since. Only recently have social observers begun to analyze the repercussions of fragmentation.²⁰³

The wealth of interactive information technologies becoming available is certain to strengthen the hands of those few citizens working for political change at the local level. Yet the bulk of the potential electorate drifts beyond the reach of frustrated national candidates. The more American or European or other voters in relatively free countries remain disengaged, the more political strategists will employ the techniques of commercial advertising. The more commercial the style of national campaigns, the more fragmented will they appear to the individual in the audience. The potential for a negative spiral lies close to the surface. At this point, no resolution — whether leading to re-emergence of a common public agenda, balkanized localities, or a nation of television couch potatoes — appears visible. The tension between integration and fragmentation appears endemic to the information society. Moreover, as long as the information society evolves globally, variations of the tension will surface in world political arenas. Coming to grips with the prospect for populist participatory politics in an information society depends on people's grasp of the many tensions fostered by the contemporary pattern of the production and distribution of information.²⁰⁴

In the above description of information technology and information distribution, there appears to be no palpable presence of

committed Muslims who have taken it upon themselves to disseminate a Qur'anic information culture,

Say, “Allah is witness between me and you; and this Qur’an has been revealed to me so that on the strength thereof I might warn you and all whom it may reach” (6:19).

The Qur'anic testimony, the Qur'anic evidence, the Qur'anic message, the Qur'anic communication, and the Qur'anic concept of authority — all integrated as they should be — have no integrated presentation. The commercialization of the media has fragmented the solidarity of the Message (*al-risālah*).

The multitude of Islamic organizations whose trail leads all the way to banks, financial institutions, and investments is guilty of this fantastic failure. The Muslim heads of such Islamic organizations, and everyone who agrees with them, are going to have to learn that they will not get anywhere so long as they are unable and unwilling to take on the corporate behemoth that has dissolved the *da'wah* and broken their *balāgh*. They want some dollars and riyals for “feel-good” activities, even though the *āyāt* they are reading teach that there can be no middle ground between Islam and *kufr*. Where are the Islamic men of character who can express with their actions this *āyah*,

Say, “Behold, I would dread, were I [thus] to betray My Sustainer, the suffering [that would befall me] on that arresting Day [of Judgement].” Upon him who shall be spared on that Day, He will indeed have bestowed His grace: and this will be a patent victory (6:15–16).

These words of truth about Allah's (ﷻ) authority and dominance need motivated and willing Muslims to express them in the face of tyranny and *tāghūt*. The inferiority complex in Arabia that has encrusted Islam with a veneer of “activism” needs to be disposed of. This Qur'an was not meant to dismantle only one

tāghūt in Makkah, Arabia, and the ancient world. Beyond that, it was meant to take apart and tear down all *tāghūts* wherever they are and whomever they may be. Let the process begin with the surety that Allah’s (ﷻ) protection has no rival and that His mercy encompasses our lives.

No Contrition on the Day of Accountability

This next lesson goes back to challenging the *mushriks* who consider the Qur'an to be a fabrication, the Day of Resurrection a fiction, and the life to come a fraud. Herein, these *mushriks* are not simply reminded of the disastrous end of their predecessors, as was the case earlier in the *sūrah*; instead, they are confronted with their own destiny on the Day of Resurrection, which they had been denying and dismissing all along. They are presented with news about their penalty, an issue they had always refused to accept in their worldly life.

The moving picture of this entire scene is stunning. The transparent Qur'an shows them all crowded together — in chagrin, anxiousness, embarrassment, and shame — having to answer the question, **“Where are the *shurakā'* (those who competed with Allah's divinity and authority in worldly life) whom you espoused?”** These *mushriks*, who appear to be mortified, terrified, and uncertain of themselves, will respond by pledging to Allah (ﷻ) that He is their Sustainer and He alone is their Authority, **“By Allah, our Sustainer, we were never *mushriks*!”** At the threshold of the Fire, these types of deniers will have nowhere to go. Panic-stricken and frightened, dishonored and guilty, they will speak out **“It is our wish to return [to life on earth] so that we will no longer take issue with our Sustainer's *āyāt* (power presence) and so that we may become of the committed Muslims!”** These miserable characters will stand in awe of Allah (ﷻ) with contrition, regret, and liability as He asks them, **“Is this not the truth?”** Overcome with sorrow and remorse, they will have no recourse but to answer, **“Indeed it is, by our Sustainer.”** But making this confession on the Day of Accountability to save themselves, after spreading all manner of corruption and indignity on earth, will be too little, too late. Justice will have to take its course, and so, **“He [Allah] said, ‘Then taste the agony due to your denial [of Me].’”** As they present themselves overburdened with sin and transgression, the overwhelming recognition that they had lost their own selves, that they had wasted their own lives will consume them. This is

when they will regret what they had done in their earthly life, but regret at this moment will have no redeeming value.

- (6:20) Those upon whom We have vouchsafed revelation aforetime know this as they know their own children; yet those [of them] who have squandered their own selves, it is they who refuse to commit [to Allah].
- (6:21) And who could be more wicked than he who attributes his own lying inventions to Allah or gives the lie to His messages? Verily, He will never allow such violaters of justice to succeed.
- (6:22) For, one Day, We shall gather them all together, and then We shall say to those who ascribed divinity to any [other beside Allah], “Where, now, are those beings whom you imagined to have a share in [Allah’s] divinity?”
- (6:23) Whereupon, in their utter confusion, they will only [be able to] say, “By Allah, our Sustainer, we did not [mean to] ascribe divinity to any beside Him!”
- (6:24) Behold how they have lied to themselves — and [how] their false imagery has forsaken them!
- (6:25) And there are among them such as [seem to] listen to you [O Prophet], but over their hearts We have laid veils that prevent them from grasping the truth, and into their ears, deafness. And were they to see every sign [of the truth], they would still not believe in it — so much so that when they come to you to contend with you, those who are bent on denying the truth say, “This is nothing but fables of ancient times!”
- (6:26) And they bar others therefrom, and go far away from it: but they destroy none but themselves, and perceive it not.
- (6:27) If you could but see [them] when they will be made to stand before the Fire and will say, “Oh, would that we were brought back [to life]: then we would not give the lie to our Sustainer’s messages, but would be among the committed Muslims!”

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ، كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ آبَاءَهُمْ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا
 أَنفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ
 بِآيَاتِهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ
 أَشْرَكُوا آيِنَ شُرَكَائِكُمْ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ ثُمَّ لَمْ تَكُنْ فَتِنَتِهِمْ إِلَّا أَنْ
 قَالُوا وَاللَّهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ ۗ وَضَلَّ
 عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ ۗ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً
 أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ۗ وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كَلَّ آيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا
 جَاءَهُمْ يُجَادِلُونَكَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسْطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَهُمْ
 يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ وَيَنْعَوْنَ عَنْهُ ۗ وَإِنْ يُهْلِكُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَلَوْ
 تَرَىٰ إِذْ وَقَفُوا عَلَى النَّارِ فَقَالُوا يَلَعِينَا نَرُدُّ وَلَا نُكَذِّبُ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّنَا وَنَكُونُ
 مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ بَلْ بَدَأَ لَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُخْفُونَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ وَلَوْ رُدُّوا لَعَادُوا لِمَا
 نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَقَالُوا إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ
 بِمَبْعُوثِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ وَقَفُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ قَالَ أَلَيْسَ هَذَا بِالْحَقِّ ۗ
 قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّنَا ۗ قَالَ فَذُقُوا الْعَذَابَ ۗ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ قَدْ خَسِرَ
 الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بِلِقَاءِ اللَّهِ ۗ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً قَالُوا يَحْشُرْنَا عَلَىٰ

مَا فَرَطْنَا فِيهَا وَهُمْ يَحْمِلُونَ أَوْزَارَهُمْ عَلَى ظُهُورِهِمْ ۗ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَزِرُونَ ﴿٣١﴾
 وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُوَ ٱلْءَدَارُ ٱلْءَاخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ
 أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

- (6:28) But no — [they will say this only because] the truth they used to conceal [from themselves] in the past will have become obvious to them; and if they were brought back [to life], they would return to the very thing that was forbidden to them: for, behold, they are indeed liars!
- (6:29) And some [of the deniers] say, “There is nothing beyond our life in this world, for We shall not be raised from the dead.”
- (6:30) If you could but see [them] when they shall be made to stand before their Sustainer [and] He will say, “Is not this the truth?” They will answer, “Yes, indeed, by our Sustainer!” [Whereupon] He will say, “Taste, then, the suffering that comes from your having refused to acknowledge the truth!”
- (6:31) Lost indeed are those who consider it a lie that they will have to meet Allah — until the Last Hour suddenly comes upon them, [and] they cry, “Alas for us, that we disregarded it!” — for they shall bear on their backs the burden of their sins: oh, how evil the load with which they shall be burdened!
- (6:32) And nothing is the life of this world but a play and a passing delight; and the life in the hereafter is by far the better for all who are conscious of Allah [His power presence]. Will you not, then, use your reason? (al-An‘ām:20–32).

Ahl al-Kitāb Knew Muhammad (ﷺ) Is a Prophet

Those who were given scripture by Us [in times past] know this [Scripture] as they know their own children; yet those [of them] who have wasted themselves, it is they who refuse to commit [to Allah] (6:20).

This assertion occurs numerous times in the Qur'an; that is, those who were privileged with scripture in times past — mainly Jews and Christians — recognize this Qur'an as they would recognize their own children. They know it to be an authentic scripture, and Muhammad (ﷺ) to be a bona fide prophet. They also know that the Qur'an was revealed by the One they consider to be God to Muhammad (ﷺ). This assertion of fact was presented in the Qur'an directly to these people of scripture when they turned argumentative, and even hostile, toward the Prophet (ﷺ). Though exchanges with the Jews in this regard took place in Madinah, this fact was also mentioned in the Qur'an when Muhammad (ﷺ) and his disciples were standing for the truth against the Arabian *mushriks* of Makkah. Thus, these *mushriks* knew with a good degree of confidence that Jews and Christians both discerned the genuineness and originality of the Qur'an as well as the pristine character of the Prophet (ﷺ).

Thus, this *āyah* appears to be Makkan in origin; it was revealed in Makkah when the committed Muslims were in a day-to-day struggle for survival against the aimless *mushriks*. The Jews and Christians in general knew and could not refute the correctness and credibility of the Qur'an and its Prophet (ﷺ). But knowing something is one thing, and committing to it is something else. In spite of their knowledge, these Jews and Christians refused to enlist themselves into the fold of Islam. This had less to do with pure knowledge than with ego, racism, and bigotry. At this juncture, the Jews, Christians, and *mushriks* had something in common: they were all wasting away their lives.

Concentrating more deeply on the meaning of this *āyah* indicates that Jews and Christians “in the know” realize the Qur'an to be sensible, reasonable, and legitimate. Hence, they are well aware

of the potential and the power contained in this irrefutable Qur'an. They know the Qur'an is a source of affluence and fortune, and that it can motivate and move its *ummaḥ* to a higher level once adherence to its guidance becomes established. They know the Qur'an is the fountainhead of morality and the springboard for a "life under God." This intimate knowledge of theirs is what makes them become pugnacious, even aggressive, against the community of committed Muslims. In their internal thoughts and in their classified policies, they see the Muslims as a threat. They know very well from history and from current events that in a world where they are the custodians of despotism and the exporters of injustice, there is no room for Muslims in pursuit of social justice. They know the inherent and integral *ḥaqq* in Islam as incisively as they are apprised of the shenanigans and chicanery that they are responsible for. They also know that the ignocracy spreading rapidly in their lands and countries and overflowing into Muslim domains cannot coexist with Islam. They know — what many Muslims refuse to acknowledge with dignity and confidence — that Islam itself will by its very nature obliterate their baseless legal structures, their vaunted militaries, and their improvised religions. This is a war in the nature of things. This is not something Muslims are praying for, nor is it something Muslims are advocating; it is as natural as gravity. These Jews-cum-Zionists and Christians-cum-imperialists at their decision-making core know that their false authority will wither away when the authority of God is explained to the people of God in the world of God according to the will of God.

This is the fact these scripture claimants know the same way and with the same intensity they know their own children. They are not dumb. They study Islam generation after generation and send their students and scholars into Muslim cities and countries to grasp an insider's view of how the latter thinks and "what he is all about." They want to know what the source of a Muslim's strength is, how Islam gains popularity, what turns people on to Islam, and why Islam is so appealing to oppressed people. After obtaining objective answers to their intriguing questions, these imperialists and Zionists view this to be the raw material to aid them in

manufacturing the ways and means to diffuse Islam and deactivate it. They initiate things through a well-organized campaign with all the mass media at their disposal to tarnish the image of this justice-oriented Islam.

Going on the offensive, they try to plant doubts in the hearts of Muslims themselves. They attempt to sow seeds of uncertainty and confusion in the minds of Muslims all over the world. Deliberately taking *āyāt* and hadiths out of context, they fire the first rounds with their analytic spin about Islam. As much as they were interested in extracting accurate information about the essence of Islam, they are now more interested in dispensing inaccurate propaganda about the performance of Islam. The last thing they want people to discover is that Islam is a force for justice in the world, a force to pull down and break up monopolies, the concentration of wealth and power, and the evils of racism and Zionism.

This whole movement of animated Muslims seeks to refresh humanity with its true authority — the authority of its Creator and Preserver. All usurpers of this divine authority are criminals and should be pursued with logic and the facts, and if that does not work, then with material means until they are no longer the oppressors of mankind with their own self-imposed authorities. When Allah is man's authority and when man is Allah's (ﷻ) constituent, then His *dīn* would be established.

This vital understanding of Islam is concealed and suppressed by these Zionists and imperialists who hide behind scripture with fancy cultural programs or nostalgic platforms that take on a sectarian or nationalistic nuance. These people in high offices will try to take the winds out of the Islamic sail by feeding people with “educational exchanges” or with some academic enterprise. They may go to the extent of allocating undisclosed budgets for concocting ways of “weeding out” of Islamic curricula all references to the ideological details, and the anti-racist and anti-imperialist dimensions within Islam. These “Jewish and Christian” authorities on Islam will even contrive elaborate theological, *fiqhī*, or sectarian differences to distract Muslims from the all-important struggle to establish Allah's (ﷻ) authority on earth. All this they will do

while making the Muslims feel that their *'aqīdah* remains intact. They take the gasoline out of the car, give it a gloss, and tell the Muslims they have the best vehicle in the world.

Nominal Jews and Christians study the Islamic *dīn* very closely, thoroughly, and seriously with all the faculties available to them, more painstakingly than their own religions. They do this not because they are searching for the truth, as some simpleminded and juvenile Muslims believe. They study this *dīn* not with an open and objective mind, even though they may praise some of it or speak highly about some aspects of Islam, as they do from time to time. There are orientalist scholars who know how to play on the emotions of naive Muslims. Their overall strategy is about temporal dominance and man's rule over man, and hence their endearing words about Islam are just one of the tactics used to disarm the Muslims as they pursue this central objective. The committed Muslims cannot afford to be fooled over and over again. Their timeless strategy, which includes deep studies about Islam and thousands of programs in academia as well as budgets galore, is geared toward finding the Islamic Achilles heel so that they can take aim and disable the Muslims forthwith. They spread out like termites trying to chip away at Islam and get to its core. They want to know exactly where the secret of Islamic power is. Once they figure out how the Muslims build their strength, they try to reverse engineer the Islamic potential toward destructive ends. They may even sugarcoat their ideas with Islamic words, Islamic rituals, Islamic Sufism, Islamic extremism, Islamic modernism, or any "Islamic" ornamental coating that will further their inimical purposes.

Therefore, with this in mind, and by reading the Qur'an and understanding it, the committed Muslims should have no illusions about the fact that the imperialists and Zionists know this Qur'an, this *dīn*, and this Prophet (ﷺ) in the same way they intimately know their own children. By not giving this issue the weight that it merits in the Muslim public conscience, the committed Muslims do so at their own peril. However, it will only be top of mind when the Muslims commit themselves to knowing their *dīn* as well as they know their own children.

Fourteen long centuries have been announcing the meanings of this *āyah*, **“Those who have been given scripture [Jews and Christians] by Us understand it [the Qur’an] as they understand their own children.”** This is so true today — especially with all that is happening around the world. It may not be an exaggeration to say that nowadays there is an article or book written about Islam every hour by these conniving and collusive Jews of Zion and Christians of imperium in every major language on earth. Put together, there is enough information to deduce that these writers, authors, and essayists are not ignorant about the core and kernel of Islam, its history, and its purpose. Aware of the Muslims’ strength, they try to learn how to resist it, to corrupt it, or to re-channel it. Most of them, of course, do not publicly acknowledge what is really on their minds.

Throughout centuries of experience, they have learned that the all-out public and direct attacks against Muslims have a counter effect as they help to mobilize and solidify the Muslim peoples against their enemies. They know that anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist, and anti-Zionist movements, revolts, and resistance were all (or the majority of them) Islamic in motivation and in popular appeal. The more they go public with their hostility and confrontation with this *dīn* and its adherents, the greater the popular backlash they will have to put up with. It only increases the zeal and reinforces the determination of revolutionary Muslims to take them on.

That is why they adopt what they consider to be a more effective approach. They begin by pouring accolades and platitudes upon Islam, saying in effect that Islam is great, marvelous, and beautiful. In this manner they arrest any Muslim suspicion of their intentions and they put any lingering doubts to rest, thereby gradually gaining the confidence of the Muslims. Upon accomplishing this, they spike their intellectual beverages with their stealth strychnine. After lauding Islam and pacifying the Muslims, they say that Islam needs to keep up with modernity, that it needs to update its concepts, and that it has to modernize itself to keep up with civilization. Islam is a religion (don’t you see), and therefore should

never be a resistance force in society; and Muslims should never think of themselves as revolutionaries who can defend their own lives and societies. Islam should remain, they tell us, as it was meant to be: a religion that belongs in the heart and nowhere else. Islam should leave all the activities of governments, all the transactions of corporations, all the laws of secular courts, and all international relations to develop in a “natural” way, without any interference from Islamic activists, an Islamic movement, or an Islamic state. Once Islam blesses what the elites are doing it becomes, according to them, a great and magnificent religion.

The dynamics of the Qurayshī Arabian society around the Prophet (ﷺ) dispatched some of its own on a mission to Yathrib (pre-Islamic name of Madinah) to ask the Jews about Muhammad (ﷺ). Upon returning to Makkah these emissaries told their people that the Jewish scriptures could not vouch for Muhammad as Allah's Prophet (ﷺ). But the Qur'an responds emphatically to the Jewish coverup of the facts, saying that they know him as closely as they know their own children. The problem at its nucleus with the Jews and the *mushriks* is that they did not want to “climb down” the social ladder. They perceive of themselves as either a chosen race (the Jews) or the elites of Arabia (the *mushriks*). And now with this Prophet (ﷺ) and scripture, how could they be expected to be the “subordinates” of Abū Tālib's orphan? In their racist and elitist minds they could not stoop down to be equals with an “African” Bilāl, a Caucasian Ṣuhayb, or any of the other impoverished and pitiful Muslims.²⁰⁵

The *Tāghūt* Have Creative Ways of Rejecting God's Authority

And who could be more offensive than he who attributes his own lying inventions to Allah or gives the lie to His *āyāt* [power manifestations]? Certainly, He will never allow such violaters of justice to succeed, for, one Day, We will amass them all together, and then We shall say to those who attributed divinity/authority to

any beside Allah, “Where, now, are those beings whom you imagined to have a share in Allah’s divinity/authority?” Whereupon, in their confounding disarray (*fitnaḥ*) they will only [be able to] say, “By Allah, our Sustainer, we did not [mean to] ascribe divinity/authority to any beside Him!” Watch attentively how they have lied to themselves, and [how] their false imagery has forsaken them! (6:21–24).

The presentation of this theme over and over again in this Qur’an of breadth and depth indicates how important the subject of authority/divinity is. It also motivates the Muslims to not shy away when it comes to the issue of divine authority and authoritative divinity, which are inseparable, and to not back down when attending to the concept of God and man’s relationship with Him. When there are elites and societies, governments and citizens, civilians and religious figures who are guilty of the one unforgiveable crime — *shirk* — then the committed Muslims will always feel compelled to correct this horrible mistake and to redirect humanity, if it comes to that, away from false gods and authorities and toward the true God and the only Authority.

According to the meanings of these *āyāt*, there are people who begin this long-drawn-out process of delegitimizing the authority of Allah (ﷻ) by attributing statements that deviate from or pervert the truth about Him. By doing this they injure the healthy relationship between man and his Creator and Sovereign. The disestablishment of Allah’s (ﷻ) authority can go hand in hand with intensive rituals attributed to the prophets themselves. In this regard, the whole “Judeo-Christian-Islamic” tradition is fiercely protective of its attachment to the rituals and history of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) while it feels comfortable in detaching itself from the struggle and laws that belong to Allah (ﷻ); this has become a lost chapter in scriptural preaching and practice. The advocates of this self-obsessed orientation, which in the contemporary world is characterized as *secular*, project the notion (as will become evident toward the end of this *sūrah*) that however they have modified the standards

on *halāl* and the strictures on *ḥarām* is what God intended them to be. No soul freed by the Qur’an and the Prophet (ﷺ) can countenance such a travesty, especially as it pertains to the definitive and powerful authority of Allah (ﷻ).

The same problem is endemic with today’s facile and truncated *īmān* wherein the faithful will swear they are Muslims of the highest order, Muslims to their bones, and Muslims until they die while at the same time they are more than comfortable obeying dictators, succumbing to tyranny, and following along within a legal system that has no roots in revelation. No person could be living a greater contradiction than the one who owes his rituals to the Creator and simultaneously owes his allegiance to a dictator. The mere fact that there are people who legislate for themselves, carve out a self-serving status quo by themselves, and impose a set of values and norms upon themselves without any reference to God, without considering what God has to say about the issues, and without a scriptural source in all this is testimony to the “meaninglessness” of God as authority and the “meaningfulness” of man as authority. With this attitude in play, how can they assert that they are “believers,” the chosen ones, or *khayra ummatin ukhrijat li-al-nās* (the best of all peoples)?

All of this is done more often than not with a blessing from religious individuals, a religious hierarchy, or a religious class that has sold its conscience to its governmental employer — many times the ministry of religious affairs. In prophetic history, even when a prophet came to such people with the truth on this matter of authority, they had no compunction in resisting him, thinking that anyone who struggles to dismantle their false assertions, bogus religion, and established status quo is silly enough to not be taken seriously. But history is its own incontrovertible testimony: all elites, governments, and interests who were satisfied with the profitable status quo turned out to be opponents of Allah (ﷻ) and enemies of His Messengers (ﷺ). Of course, the first thing they have always said is that this affirmation of Allah’s authority does not come from Allah (ﷻ) Himself. Parallel to that they have assembled their paid academics and deferential experts to rationalize that their social

structure and state system are in the “image of God.” The voice of the Pharaoh, the Caesar, and the President are indistinguishable and their messages are identical, **“And who could be more wrong than he who attributes his own trumped-up inventions to Allah or gives the lie to His *āyāt*?”**

The word *ẓulm* in this *āyah* — which in its general meaning may refer to *wickedness*, *offense*, and *injustice* — specifically designates *shirk*.²⁰⁶ *Shirk* and its derivatives are mentioned around 167 times in the rejuvenating Qur’an. Despite the perfunctory and casual definition this word has gained through the ages and generations of a creeping secularization of scripture, the concept has to be revisited and revised. And this has to be done in the face of all the obstacles, mental and material, that will most likely encumber the way to reversing the reductionist understanding in vogue among most Muslims.

Any Muslim “knows” that *shirk* is an unforgivable sin. *Shirk* dooms its practitioner to eternal damnation. But what is *shirk*? Who are the individuals or masses of individuals addressed as *mushriks*? Succinctly put, they are the ones who interfere with Allah’s (ﷻ) authority, imputing it to themselves. However, having said this, there appears to be some confusion in the majority of Muslims who often use the terms *kufr* and *shirk* interchangeably. In looking assiduously at these critical *āyāt* of the Qur’an, the usage of the words *kufr* and *shirk* reflect the unique features and distinctions of each. *Kufr* refers, in a general sense, to the denial of Allah (ﷻ) and His place in human life. By way of comparison, *shirk*, in a general sense, refers to the particular attribute of authority. So, when this constitutive word occurs in the holy Text, it leads to and is associated with the authority of Allah (ﷻ). In this lexical area there is an overlap between the word *kufr* and the word *shirk*. But what distinguishes *shirk* from *kufr* or *mushrik* from *kāfir* is that the former is not necessarily denying Allah’s sovereignty and authority but rather diminishing them or assigning the right or description to others besides Allah, when they are the exclusive holdings of Allah — and only Allah (ﷻ). Using a biological metaphor to clarify things, it could be said that *shirk* composes the vital organs of the body —

heart, lungs, kidneys, etc. — while *kufr* is the general body itself including its non-vital parts. Therefore, even though a finger or a limb can be taken away from the body, the body will still survive; but a vital part of the body, such as a heart or brain, cannot be taken away so as to enable the body to sustain itself. Hence, for some people who may be guilty of *kufr*, there may be room for divine forgiveness; but when they are actively guilty of *shirk* they cannot expect pardon or redemption.

Shirk (and in some discourses *ishrāk*) is the “psychological to ideological to political” assertion of an authority or authorities that try to either rival or eclipse the authority of Allah (ﷻ). This is particularly pronounced when *shirk* becomes well known through well-established figures of authority such as kings, presidents, pharaohs, and emperors. In a socio-political sense, *shirk* is the ideology that is meant to minimize or seclude the authority of God from the conscious and active lives of peoples and societies. To say that *shirk* is polytheism is to recoil from the overall and central matter of authority that is a fundamental and essential attribute of divinity.²⁰⁷

An important research project for the avid student of the Qur'an would be to trail the word *shirk* throughout this divine Scripture as it was revealed in both Makkan and Madinan *āyāt*. As a prelude to such an investigation, this author's reading suggests that the words *shirk*, *mushrik*, and all the derivatives thereof were mostly absent during the early-Makkan period simply because the struggle at that time was a conceptual and ideological one. As the Islamic struggle for social change developed, the committed Muslims began to confront those who are in authority, the legislators of society, the “judicial system,” and the executive class. Since this activity was concentrated in the era of Madinah, the initial impression here is that most of the *āyāt* pertaining to *shirk*, if not the overwhelming majority of them, were revealed in Madinah.

The concept of *shirk* is more intimately intertwined with *mulk* (what belongs to God that man wants to possess) and *ḥukm* (governance/rule), than with the notions of “paganism” and “idolatry.” So to clear the air around the misconstrued concept of *shirk*, this *tafsīr* will start by digging into the Judeo-Christian impositions on the

concept and then look at the meanings of *ḥukm* and *mulk*, which are inextricably linked to the meaning and understanding of *shirk*.

Both in the Bible and in modern usage, the term *idolatry* ranges in meaning from the narrow sense of offering sacrifice and prayer to a material representation of deity (an *idol*) to the broad sense of giving ultimate importance to some person, thing, or concept other than God. The actual term *idolatry* (*eidololatreia* in Greek) is used most frequently in the New Testament, where it is listed among the “works of the flesh” (Galatians, 5:20; 1 Peter, 4:3). The figurative sense appears in the phrase “covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians, 3:5). The same equation, though with the term *idolater*, is also offered in the Book of Ephesians (5:5) and indirectly in the Book of Philippians (3:19), “whose God is their belly.” The more literal sense, worship of idols, is treated at some length by St. Paul (1 Corinthians, 8:1–13, 10:14–33). In these passages Paul the Apostle makes light of idols as such, “...we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one” (1 Corinthians, 8:4). In some minds the issue is whether or not a Christian believer is wrong to be present at a non-Christian friend’s festival table at which food blessed in the name of pagan deities is eaten. While acknowledging that the idolatrous practice is of no effect, being based upon no reality whatever, St. Paul cautions against letting “...this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak” (1 Corinthians, 8:9).²⁰⁸

In the Old Testament, the term *idolatry* occurs three times. In the Book of 1 Samuel (15:23), it is a translation of the Hebrew term *seraphim*, elsewhere taken to mean a household god image (Genesis, 31:19–35; Judges, 17:5–18:20; 1 Samuel, 19:13–16; 2 Kings, 23:24; Ezekiel, 21:21; Hosea, 3:4; Zechariah, 10:2). In the Book of Ezekiel (23:49), the very common term *gillulim* (idols) is translated abstractly as *idolatry* (Revised Standard Version). And again in the Book of Ezekiel (43:9), the passage reads “...now let them put away their idolatry” (Revised Standard Version; in the King James Version, *idolatry* is replaced with *whoredom*, as the latter is considered to be the worst form of idolatry). Nonetheless, the concept, if not the actual term, is richly pervasive. In addition

to those already mentioned, a whole repertoire of synonymous terms and euphemisms is employed to indicate the presence of misplaced allegiance in worship. Hebrew and Aramaic terms, as understood through the European mind, variously translate *idol* to mean *iniquity, terror, horror, grief, abomination, form, graven image, and pillar*.²⁰⁹

It thus becomes of little or no surprise in the course of Judeo-Christian interpretation of history that Israel should have had to contend with the lure of idolatry. The ancient Near Eastern context out of which Israel emerged at the end of the 13th century BCE was replete with cults and state religions that stressed the presence of deities in all aspects of nature. Egyptian religion identified the Sun as Amon-Re, the king of the gods; other deities were shown in animal forms, including the jackal-headed god of the dead, Anubis, and the cow goddess, Hathor. Mesopotamian religion, with which Israel had contact in its formative periods and again during the period of Assyrian domination and the Babylonian exile, represented the greater and lesser gods in both animal and human forms and permitted worship in local sanctuaries with the use of crude images and amulets.²¹⁰

Above all, Israel had to contend with the religion of Canaan that preceded and surrounded Israel throughout its ancient tenure in the land of Palestine. The chief god in the Canaanite pantheon, El, was entitled “the bull,” and the rain god, the cloud-rider Baal, was seen as a warrior who wore a bull-horned helmet. The fertility goddess Astarte (alluded to in the Old Testament by the name Ashtoreth — Judges, 2:13 — and sometimes Asherah — Judges, 6:25–32; 1 Kings, 18:19; 2 Kings, 21:7) was widely and crudely pictured in statuettes and amulets throughout the Near East, even in the parts of Palestine settled by those Israelis. In fact, it is clear that the popular religion of Israel, in contrast to the pure Yahwism described by the pentateuchal writers and proclaimed by the prophets per the Judaic-Christian narrative of history, was deeply affected by the idolatrous practices of Canaan. This is explicit in the account of the establishment at Samaria by Israeli King Ahab of the Baal cult of his wife, the Sidonian princess Jezebel (1 Kings, 16:31–32).

It is equally explicit in the much later account of the reforms of Hezekiah (2 Kings, 18:3–4) and Josiah (2 Kings, 23). The latter text speaks specifically of idolatrous priests “...who burned incense to Baal, to the Sun, and the Moon, and the constellations, and all the host of the heavens” (2 Kings, 23:5); of Asherah that was in the house of the Lord, the male cult prostitutes, the high places all over the country, and the place called Topheth in the vale of Hinnom near Jerusalem where people burned their children as offerings to Molech (2 Kings, 23:6–11); and of the chariots of the sun and the altars on the roof, and even of the high places that “...Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites” (2 Kings, 23:12–13).²¹¹

If popular religion in Israel was so deeply penetrated by the practices of Canaan, it is no wonder that the first commandment — like the rest of the Decalogue (the Biblical “Ten Commandments” of Moses – 𐤇𐤍𐤏) probably incorporated into the Sinai account by the Elohistic writer who is believed to have worked in the northern kingdom of Israel in the ninth century BCE — makes a fundamental distinction, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus, 20:3; compare with Deuteronomy, 5:7). “Other gods” may exist; the commandment does not deny that possibility. But they must not interfere in the complete bonding that is to take place between Yahweh and the chosen people of Israel. This commandment is a demand for total allegiance and bears a direct relationship to Israel’s most fundamental confession “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” (Deuteronomy, 6:4, King James Version), or perhaps even better, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone” (New Revised Standard Version).²¹²

The account of the reform of Josiah (about 621 BCE), already alluded to, concludes with the remark that Josiah pulled down “...the altar at Bethel, the high place erected by Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin” (2 Kings, 23:15). This is a reference to the cult established as a rival to that of Jerusalem by the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel after its secession from the united dominion of Solomon (1 Kings, 12:25–33). Many now in the Judeo-

Christian mindset suggest that the two golden calves that Jeroboam placed, one in Dan and one in Bethel, were actually either footstools or representations of Yahweh. If so, the king may have been speaking of Yahweh when he dedicated them with the words, "...behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (1 Kings, 12:28). However, the establishment of an image, even an image of Yahweh, was regarded by the deuteronomistic writers as a sin that affected the entire history of Israel (1 Kings, 14:7–16). In forbidding graven images, the second commandment (Exodus, 20:4–6; Deuteronomy, 5:8–10) probably intends to forbid exactly the kind of thing represented by Jeroboam's golden calves, or for that matter, the original golden calf (Exodus, 32:4). To localize and concretize God, creator of all that is, in an object is not only absurd, but it is also a self-serving act because it suggests that God can be manipulated to the advantage of those who own the shrine. Yahweh will not permit this, because God discloses truth and direction not through the ministrations of priests before an idol but to those faithful servants to whom God freely chooses to speak.²¹³

Iconoclasm (the abhorrence of graven images and likenesses of deity) and opposition to idolatry in general survived the strife with Baal that permeated the period of Elijah and Elisha, Hosea, and Jeremiah. In and after the Babylonian exile, it became a hallmark of Judaism. The latest Old Testament testimony to the revulsion of Israel against the practice of idolatry is found in the story of the three young Jews who refused to fall down before the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, placed upon the plain of Dura (Daniel, 3). Just before they were to be cast into the fiery furnace, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego make this memorable assertion of their liberty from the bondage of idolatry,

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up (Daniel, 3:17–18).

This utter refusal to acknowledge the slightest authenticity to the representation of the Deity in an idol points directly to the tendency of both the Pharisaic rabbis and the writers of the New Testament to regard idolatry as a silly, vacuous sin based upon no perceptible reality. In a sense, the demise of idolatry and the triumph of the living and imageless religion of the Judeo-Christian tradition was summed up by St. Paul on the Areopagus hill. As he stood there among the fading splendor of pagan worship, he proclaimed that the unknown God whom the Athenians acknowledged and who

...made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things (Acts of the Apostles, 17:24–25).²¹⁴

Idolatry in Judaism and Christianity and in the modern day secular or Judeo-Christian interpretation imparts the worship of someone or something other than God as though it were God. A reflection of the strength of the prohibition of this practice in monotheism is its listing as the first of the biblical Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."²¹⁵

Several forms of idolatry have been distinguished. Gross, or overt, idolatry consists of explicit acts of reverence addressed to a person or an object — the Sun, the king, an animal, a statue. A person commits a more subtle idolatry, however, when, although overt acts of adoration are avoided, he attaches to a creature or some other object of veneration the confidence, loyalty, and devotion that properly belong only to the Creator.

In Judaism, the prophetic denunciation of idolatry as the "worship of sticks and stones," as Judaism characterized prayer to an object people have made with their own hands, obscured what is at stake in the graven image (the representation of divinity in concrete ways), but defined Judaism's dealings with the world. Ju-

daism rejected all images and forms of god, and defined all those outside the Jewish faith as idolaters. In Rabbinic Judaism an extensive corpus of law regulated the Israelis' dealings with idolaters on their festivals and forbade Israelis from deriving any benefit whatsoever from commerce with Gentiles on their festival days; the remainder of a bottle of wine opened and used for a libation could not be consumed by Israelis. Gentiles, defined as idolaters, could not touch wine intended for Israeli use, lest they make a libation of a few drops from it.²¹⁶

Strictly from a Jewish perspective, Judaism was the only religion in the ancient world to oppose idol-worship. However, foreign influences introduced idolatrous practices among the Jews, against which their prophets struggled continually. Idolatry made its heaviest inroads in the northern kingdom where the worship centered around the golden calves set up by Jeroboam. During the Babylonian exile, idolatry seems to have disappeared altogether from among the Jews, and the rabbis maintained that whoever rejected idolatry was considered as having acknowledged the whole Torah. Rabbinic law as recorded in the Mishnah treatise, *Avodah Zarah*, deals therefore, not with Jews serving idols but with rabbinic prohibitions against contact with idolaters. Thus, commerce with an idolater was prohibited before an idolatrous holiday so that the Jews may not even have an indirect share in preparations for such. The rabbis prohibited the selling or leasing of land or houses in Palestine to an idolater, nor was it permitted to sell animals to an idolater, or to eat at the same table with him. Moreover, they forbade the eating of his bread, oil, or wine and declared all gentile wine as “wine of idolatrous libation.”²¹⁷

With all this, certain schools of Christian thought have insisted upon the principle of mediation and have rejected the charge that attachment to a mediating agency is automatically idolatrous. Christians are not in agreement about the agents of mediation, for example, the role of the Virgin Mary (☩) and of the other saints. But where such mediation is acknowledged to be present, it is also generally acknowledged that reverence shown toward it applies not to the agent himself but to the one for whom the agent

stands. Two special instances include the human nature of Jesus Christ (ﷺ), which according to Christians is worthy of divine worship because of its inseparable union with the Second Person of the Holy Trinity; and the consecrated Host in the Eucharist, which, by Roman Catholic doctrine, may properly be adored because it has been changed into the very body of Christ.²¹⁸

Trailing onto this Judeo-Christian conceptual hodgepodge comes the contemporary and virtually non-Qur'anic definition of *shirk* as idolatry. And therefore, going along with Judeo-Christian thinking, idolatry, in Islam, is generally conceived to be in contradiction to the command to worship only one God. As such, it is an expression of polytheism (*shirk*, literally *attributing partners to God*) and disbelief (*kufur*, literally *ingratitude*), in opposition to what Muslims construe to be true religion. In affirming aspects of this Judeo-Christian narrative, the Qur'an recognizes Abraham as the ancestral opponent of idolatry, even though it uses the term pejoratively in attacking the beliefs of Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) opponents. Indeed, one of the Prophet's first acts after liberating Makkah in 8AH was reported to have been the destruction of hundreds of idols housed in the Ka'bah. Idol plundering and smashing thereafter became a recurrent theme in historical accounts of Muslim conquests.

As in Christianity, Muslim religious jurisdictions have employed the term to disparage the beliefs and practices of other Muslims. "Sunnīs" have accused "Shī'īs" of idolatry for their devotion to the Imams, and Sufism has come under suspicion because of the authority claimed by the shaykhs and the widespread veneration of Sufi holy men and women. Sufi writers, particularly in the Persian tradition, turned the tables on their accusers by using metaphors of idolatry favorably to express their absorption in God, for they saw in all created forms, including idols, signs of God's unity and love. Still within the influence of Judeo-Christian perceptions, modern descriptions of Islamic reform movements highlight the negative associations of the term to condemn materialism and any humanistic ideology that fails to recognize God's unity and sovereignty.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the term *idolatry* was used in European scholarship to classify any non-Western, non-monotheistic

religion. However, in today’s humanities and social sciences, the term is no longer used in this way.

The Qur’an itself does not lend its meanings to the rigorous attempts in the Judeo-Christian understanding of scripture, and thus in their attempt to sweep the word and meaning of *shirk* into their religious definitions or ritualistic intentions. The word *shirk*, for anyone who cares to trace its contextual meaning in the Qur’an, is saturated with an ambiance of *ḥukm*, *mulk*, *walāyah*, and *sharī‘ah*. The following *āyāt* demonstrate this milieu,

...besides Him they have no higher-ranking ally; and He does not affiliate with anyone in His governing (18:26);

...and He fostered no child and He has no collaborator in [the running of] His dominion (25:2);

Or do they have co-authorities [along with Allah] who legislate for them matters of *dīn* that Allah has not permitted? (42:21).

When human affairs and human societies take their orders from authorities they consider co-equals of God, when people are satisfied with regimes and governments that improvise laws or pull their own regulations out of their own hats, and when societies feel comfortable with elites and classes of power who themselves are the authorities on the vital issues of life in exclusion of God or in marginalization of God, then they are guilty of *shirk*, even if they adore a God in heaven, if they worship “one God,” and if they have broken all the idols on earth.

Shirk is the inexcusable and deadly sin that violates the most accentuated substance and sense of divinity — that is, God’s authority. Once this is done by any society, it sets itself up for the destructive and annihilating consequences that will most definitely follow if no corrective measures are taken. *Shirk*, much more than a simplistic paganism or a crude idolatry, is a parody of the truth.

Shirk is ultimately a subversion of man's lively relationship with his Creator and Regulator. *Shirk* is a social catastrophe in the making. That is because *shirk* is an act of aggression against the sovereignty of Allah (ﷻ) and an assault on His authority. In the realm of governance, authority, and command, Allah (ﷻ) has no contender, no double, and no equal. *Shirk* demeans Allah (ﷻ) in the conscience of man because temporal power structures think they can stand in for His quintessential attributes of confidence, command, and control — in other words, His authority, **“In truth, such injustice-doers will never attain to success.”**

Infused in the meanings of these *āyāt* is the fact that *shirk* is a crime in every sense of the word because its practitioners seek justice from any and every source other than Allah (ﷻ). The terminal destination of a God-demeaning society that is guilty of *shirk* and, therefore, unfairness and iniquity, shall be failure, decline, and bankruptcy. The immediate glare of electrifying and titillating societies should never obstruct the Muslims' view of the impending doom awaiting a *shirk-ridden* social unit — even if that social unit is in the Holy Land, in the Promised Land, or in the Biblical Lands. Geography and history are not going to alter or arrest the inevitabilities associated with incontrovertible social laws, which are presented to all humanity through these sharp-sighted *āyāt* that beg for a human component and a practical adaptation.

The Qur'an lays out a lively interpretation of history and a vital understanding of what happens to communal orders and social aggregates when governments and decision makers do away with the authority of Allah (ﷻ) while assigning this role to themselves. In the past century, just to take a sample of the most recent instability and disorientation, all the major upheavals can be attributed to the absence of God as man's authority on earth. Although these events are looped with another and preceding ones, their common denominator is man's refusal to refer to God as his only and final authority. In spite of the mess that has been building up from generation to generation, man has continued to authorize creatures and things to manage his havoc-wreaking attitude, and there appears to be no light at the end of this self-conceited and authoritarian tunnel.

What occurred at the dawn of the 20th century is the formation of a world economy between 1870 and 1914. One of its main features was the way in which the world's economy came together into a single interdependent whole, to an extent inconceivable in earlier ages. The focus of this process was Europe, with the United States as a subsidiary center, and from this nucleus were exported the coalescing (colonial) impulses that opened up the last “unknown” landmasses of the globe to European exploration, penetration, and exploitation. Entire continents — settled and unsettled, colonial and independent — were either linked or dragged into military industrial and commercial capitalism, which had conquered most of Europe and North America in preceding ages. This whole venture was the precursor to imperialism, today's grandest expression of injustice. Among the most debased victims of imperialist aggression and colonial occupation, the Muslims, who are flipping through the pages of this honest Qur'an, should be the first to recognize that imperialism became a grand expression of injustice because the authority of Allah (ﷻ) was always rivaled, eclipsed, or omitted by the elitist lords of capital and the cavalier masters of slaves.²¹⁹

Another expression of demeaning, degrading, and disgracing God's authority with a global punch was the Russian Revolution (1917–1925). It is argued by some that no other single event has had as decisive an impact upon the modern world as the Russian Revolution of 1917. It opened a new epoch in Russia's history, transforming an underdeveloped country into an industrial and military superpower, fundamentally altering the pattern of international relations. Above all, it inaugurated the age of modern revolutions. By showing that Marxists could gain power and begin the construction of a socialist society, the Bolsheviks inspired revolutionaries everywhere to emulate their victory. After 1917 the world stood witness to a couple of generations of societies scattered around the globe looking for legitimacy and sovereignty on a self-destructive course that excluded God in an official and military sense from any human activity, going as far as trying to exterminate the idea of God from the thoughts of men altogether. Today, those who are pumping out rationalizations to justify the expansion of

American power and the forced democratization of the Third World may be condemned to relearn these lessons of history, for they will not be looking back and echoing the *āyāt* about how a course of *shirk* will inevitably lead to a travesty of justice as was the obvious case with Soviet atheism and Marxism.²²⁰

From 1919 to 1941, some parts of the world were entering into a new age of denying God's authority: the age of imperialism and nationalism. By the 1920s the growth of the European empires in Asia and North Africa had peaked. At the end of WWI, France gained control of Syria and Lebanon. Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan were drawn into the area of British control, which already included Egypt, the Sudan, the southern and eastern fringes of Arabia, India, Burma, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and the Malay states. The Dutch remained in the East Indies, the Spaniards consolidated their control over the northern zone of Morocco, and the Italians theirs over Libya. After this, the only important addition was Ethiopia, conquered by Italy in 1935. Turkey and Persia, (Saudi) Arabia and Yemen, Afghanistan and Siam were independent, but only within limits: the power of European armies, navies, and air forces, and the domination of world markets by the industrial states of the West, were facts that even independent countries had to take into account. Moreover, economic domination by the Western countries began to assume a new dimension with the increasing demand for oil for armies and industry, and the discovery and exploitation of large oil resources in the Muslim East. This double-sided issue (the colonizers and the colonized) wreaks of *shirk* as both sides showed a disregard for the authority of God, albeit many resistance movements within the Islamic hemisphere tried their best to stand for whatever remnants of *tawhīd* had lasted. Suffice it to say that this was not enough as history took a turn favoring the colonialists and imperialists.²²¹

Another flagrant manifestation of *shirk* was the Chinese Revolution (1912–1949). The foundation of the Republic in 1912 failed to produce a lasting political solution for China's problems. Within weeks Sun Yat-sen, the revolutionary who had been elected China's first president, was replaced by Yuan Shih-k'ai, China's

most powerful military figure under the old order. Yuan and the revolutionary leaders were soon involved in bitter political struggles; Yuan suppressed a “Second Revolution” that broke out in the provinces in 1913, and by 1914 was a virtual dictator.²²²

China’s position was seriously weakened. The government was forced to borrow huge sums abroad to offset the lack of a modern revenue system, and the whole customs revenue passed into foreign hands. Tibet and Mongolia broke away, becoming autonomous, but under British and Russian dominance respectively; in 1924 Mongolia finally became independent. More serious were the expansionist plans of Japan. When the outbreak of WWI diverted the attention of the Western powers from Asia, Japan seized the German leased territory and sphere of influence in Shantung, and then presented China with a set of demands that would have reduced her to a Japanese dependency. Yuan resisted the more extreme demands, but in 1915 a treaty was signed establishing Japanese dominance in Shantung, Manchuria, and inner Mongolia. This provoked a massive upsurge of nationalist feeling. In all of these events and the many others that ended in a Chinese civil war after WWII no one — nationalist, socialist, or liberal — was referring to God’s authority on matters of relations with other peoples, the “national debt,” and other internal Chinese affairs. This is yet one more prime example of human political and military behavior when God is not acknowledged as the reference authority in society.²²³

From 1919 to 1934, Europe added another increment to its legendary exclusion of God from man’s affairs of justice. The collapse of the Central Powers in the Autumn of 1918 and the subsequent peace treaties of Versailles (1919) between the Allies and Germany, of St. Germain (1919) with Austria, of Neuilly (1919) with Bulgaria, and of Trianon (1920) with Hungary, brought about major frontier changes, the emergence of a number of new states, and the enlargement of others fortunate enough to be on the victorious side. New states included Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (all now independent of their former Russian overlords); Poland (reconstituted from the three empires that had shared in its partition at the end of the 18th century); Czechoslovakia, compris-

ing the old Habsburg “crown lands” of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, together with Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia from former Hungarian territory; and Yugoslavia, comprising the territories of the former independent kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro, the former crown land of Croatia, the former Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Habsburg provinces of Slovenia and Dalmatia. Romania enlarged itself greatly, taking Transylvania from Hungary, the Dobruja from Bulgaria, and Bessarabia from Russia. Italy took the South Tyrol (Alto Adige) and the Triestino, the former Habsburg province of Istria. France recovered Alsace-Lorraine, and Belgium the small frontier areas of Eupen and Malmedy. Plebiscites held in the disputed areas of Upper Silesia, Marienwerder, Allenstein, and Holstein resulted in more or less satisfactory solutions on ethnic lines, although the Poles did their best to annex Upper Silesia by force of arms.²²⁴

This whole exercise of power in the absence of man referring to Allah’s (ﷻ) authority, especially as it pertains to the “victorious” Europeans, will come back one day to haunt the political offspring of its ideological progenitors. No one consulted the guidelines from heaven on ethnic, national, and racial integration or independence. Therefore, the consequences are bound to be ruinous because this is yet another expression of *shirk* as it relates to *ḥukm*, *mulk*, *walāyah*, and *sultān*.

Ethnic satisfaction with the other post-WWI settlements of Europe was far from satisfactory, irredenta being scattered wholesale across the map of Eastern Europe, save only on the boundary between Greece and Turkey, where at the end of the Greco-Turkish War (1920–1922) a wholesale exchange of populations was negotiated. Danzig and the Saarland were set up under League of Nations High Commissioners, the Saarland reverting to Germany by plebiscite in 1935. Peace with Turkey was delayed until the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), owing to the inability of the Allies to impose their terms on a nascent Turkish national movement despite their enlisting the help of the Greeks. On Europe’s eastern frontiers settlement had to await the victory of the Bolsheviks in the Russian civil war, and the repulsion first of the Polish invasion of Russia and

then of the Soviet invasion of Poland. The Western powers proposed a mediated frontier along the Curzon Line (Spa Conference, 1920). The frontier, finally settled at the Treaty of Riga (1920), gave Poland a large minority of white Russians and Ukrainians.²²⁵

Today, people look at Europe and think it is a stable place; there is a European Union, there is a common currency, border barriers have come down, and a full integration policy is in process. However, onlookers should not be so easily deceived, especially since Brexit was the first shot across the bow of the European Union.²²⁶ This whole European facade is bound to collapse because the whole edifice has been put together with the grandest sin of all: *shirk*.

The repercussions of *shirk* are also felt in the social and economic spheres of life. One such incident was the Great Depression (1929–1939). The chronology of the “Slump” is by now well known, but its causes are still debated. What is certain is that the stock market crash of 1929, and the ensuing worldwide financial collapse, were only the manifestation of deeper weaknesses in the world economy. The sources of instability were several: WWI caused a dramatic increase in productive capacity, especially outside Europe, but there was no corresponding increase in demand. Above all, there was a worldwide imbalance between agriculture and industry. The rewards of growth accrued disproportionately to the industrialized countries and, within these countries, to their industrial and financial sectors. Increased production allowed food and raw material prices to decline throughout the 1920s, worsening the terms of trade for countries dependent on the export of such commodities, and decreasing their ability to buy the industrial products of Europe and the United States. Within the latter, wages lagged behind profits, impairing the development of domestic markets, and limiting the potential of new industries, such as automobiles, to replace declining ones, like textiles. International finance never fully recovered from the dislocations of WWI. The pre-war system of fixed exchange rates and free convertibility was replaced by a compromise — the Gold Exchange Standard — which never achieved the stability necessary to rebuild world trade.²²⁷

The depression itself was touched off by financial crisis. The great Bull Market of 1928 — itself a sign of weakness, of shrinking opportunities for investment — gave way to a precipitous fall in stock prices in late-1929. In the ensuing scramble for liquidity, funds flowed back from Europe to America, and the shaky European prosperity collapsed. In 1931, the Austrian Credit-Anstalt defaulted. When England left the Gold Standard, allowing pound sterling to depreciate in late-1931, virtually the entire world was affected.²²⁸

In many industrial countries, over a quarter of the labor force was thrown out of work. Industrial production fell to 53% of its 1929 level in Germany and the United States, and world trade sank to 35% of its 1929 value. For many, the Great Depression seemed endless; it brought about the collapse not only of economic liberalism, but also of liberal political institutions. And so, the triumph of the authoritarian colonial regimes proved short-lived. They were incapable of restoring the old order, or of establishing a stable new one, and ultimately perished in WWII. When Allah (ﷻ) says *shirk* is a great travesty of justice, He means it.²²⁹

Shirk has its ruinous effect on man in this world, before he encounters its damning consequences in the following world. The events of the years 1931–1941 marked the breakdown of the international security system set up in 1919. This system, centered round the League of Nations, was designed to prevent the escalation of a dispute between two states into a general war, as in 1914. It could not rely on American support, and the Soviet Union, though a member of the League from 1934–1939, never played a major role. Leadership therefore fell to “Great” Britain and France. Italy alone, and possibly Japan, might have been deterred or dissuaded from expansion, but Germany under Hitler was, in the last resort, irrationally set up for world power or defeat. When all three joined together in the Anti-Comintern pact and then in the Tripartite Pact, the allied powers were thrown on the defensive.²³⁰

Japanese expansionism was fueled by exclusion from vital markets and by a sense of racial discrimination on the part of the “whites.” The ruling groups were also driven by fear of conspiracies among nationalist extremists, especially in the officer corps, such as

those who provoked the expulsion of Chinese authority from Manchuria in 1931 and mutinied in 1936. Japanese expansion began with pressure on northern China, continued with open conquest of central China and the Chinese coastline in 1937–1939, spread into northern Indo-China, and finally, under the pressure of the American economic embargo imposed in mid-1941, culminated in the attack on Pearl Harbor (Hawaii, USA) and the seizure of the central Pacific territories and Southeast Asia.²³¹

The Great Depression fell heavily upon Japan. The great majority of the Japanese people became deeply disillusioned with party government. They believed that their army's conquest of Manchuria and advances in inner Mongolia and northern China indicated their nation's predestined role to become the new leader of east Asia. They were convinced that the exploitation of those regions would ease the economic stresses resulting both from a rapidly growing population and from military expenditures that absorbed half of the national budget.²³²

Italian expansionism was inspired by Mussolini's need to fulfill the nationalist ambitions his democratic predecessors had failed to meet and to maintain his prestige as a world leader. This led him to build up Italy's position in central Europe and to seek a colonial empire in Ethiopia in 1935. British and French resistance, and the anti-fascist Popular Front victory in France, induced him to intervene in Spain, and to turn to Hitler in the Rome-Berlin Axis of 1936. Thereafter, imitation of Hitler inspired him to claim French territory in 1938, annex Albania in 1939 and, after the defeat of France, attack Greece in 1940. But military and economic weakness stultified his efforts to match Hitler's achievements, and tied him to Hitler in the Pact of Steel (1939).²³³

WWII was a global theater of bloodletting. This happens when the authority of Allah is no longer in the conscience of man, when the sovereignty of Allah is no longer in the life of man, and when the legitimacy of Allah (ﷻ) is no longer in the mind of man. In other words, events on the scale of world wars happen when *shirk* reigns supreme. The nature of WWII was “total,” mobilizing everyone and embracing all sectors of society, even those that were

traditionally considered to be non-military. Britain and the Soviet Union achieved total mobilization, including severe food rationing, from 1940 onward. Germany only adopted full mobilization in 1944, led by Josef Goebbels and Albert Speer. The American unused productive capacity was so great that the US economy enjoyed boom conditions where Europe and the western USSR saw major destruction and massive movements of population. Several million slave and contract laborers were drawn into Germany; German settlers were sent into the Baltic states and then withdrawn. Over 10 million Germans were expelled from Eastern Europe or fled the Russian advance. Germany rounded up Europe's Jewish minority for reasons pertaining to its war-effort and the predominant role European Jewry had played in the economic and financial circles that turned against Germany. Joseph Stalin deported 16 minority peoples from the Crimea and Caucasus for alleged collaboration with the Germans. One hundred million men and women were mobilized to fight. The dead have been estimated at 15 million military and 35 million civilians (20 million of these being Soviet citizens, 4.5 million Poles, and 6 million others, among them Jews). There are no reliable estimates of the wounded. When the war ended, the leaders of the so-called Big Three countries led the United Nations. But Britain and Europe were bankrupt, and European Russia was in ruins. Only the United States, whose money and industries had, through the "lend lease" policy, sustained and augmented the war economies of its allies, seemed the immediate and real victor.²³⁴

It is long overdue for the sincere students of this Qur'an to stop the ongoing cover-up of the meaning of the most serious of sins and the most calamitous of crimes — *shirk*. Those who are guilty of *shirk* with some of the aforementioned historical consequences only in a portion of the last century will not be escaping accountability forever; these political predators, war criminals, financial felons, and military monsters are approaching a life of definite aftermaths,

**For, one Day, We shall gather them all together, and
then We shall say to those who shattered Our authority**

(*ashrakū*), “Where are your on-par-with-God personnel whom you used to assume [as your authority reference]?” Upon which, this affair becomes their *fitnah* and they will only [be able to] state, “By Allah, our Sustainer, we were not *mushriks*.” Project how they have lied to themselves and how their contrived authorities have abandoned them in disarray (6:22–24).

This *shirk* comes packaged in economic models and philosophies of governance. The perpetrators of *shirk* are themselves sophisticated and multifaceted. *Shirk* is not the oversimplified and almost pagan-specific definition that has settled into a Muslim public mind reading the free of charge “Islamic” literature merchandised by the regime occupying Makkah and Madinah. Chap-eroned by a mammoth budget, this infantile and parochial definition tries to convince the average Muslim that the *mushriks* are those people who worship idols or craft graven images of God made of stone or a heap of date-palms. How satisfied the authentic *mushriks* of the world would be when we, the Muslims, are busy peddling a bogus definition of *shirk* that centers around rocks, trees, planets, or fire, thereby relieving them of the most serious sin, the most heinous crimes, and the fitting exposé they deserve.

This all-important, built-in meaning and life-sustaining understanding of *shirk* is what governments, elites, high societies, and shadow cliques are trying their utmost to hide. The essential true-to-form meaning of *shirk* is man’s recognition of “authority” as vested in some human being, establishment, or government. Man has to affirm that authority, sovereignty, and legitimacy belong to Allah (ﷻ) exclusively and are binding on him as such. Thus, human beings refraining from *shirk* recognize that Allah (ﷻ) has complete control over things physical or social, material or psychological. The unfolding of authority in man’s life or the legal and territorial extent of authority are defined by Allah and the practice of His Messenger (ﷺ). Allah (ﷻ) is man’s authority in the sense that He is man’s ruling power. Even the influence and dominion of parents and seniors have to be extracted or drawn out of His authority.

One of the more intractable problems in this area is that there are “Muslims” who have subverted the meaning of *shirk* at the expense of a world looking for this bracing meaning. The scope of the problem widens because there are tyrants and their minions who are busy trying to maintain the “traditional” or status quo definition of *shirk* — the one that is financed by the like-minded descendants of Abū Jahl and the nationalist offspring of Abū Lahab.²³⁵ Under the heading “Ideological War,” the *Washington Times* (known to be on close terms with the US intelligence community, especially the CIA) had the following to say,

The US government needs to develop a counter-ideology to Islamic extremism as part of its multifaceted global war on terrorism, according to a former US counterintelligence official.

An aggressive ideological war on Islamic extremism should complement military, diplomatic, and economic measures, but ideology has been neglected by the US government, writes William Gawthrop in the current issue of the *Vanguard*, the journal of the Military Intelligence Corps Association.

Specifically, Mr. Gawthrop, whose views in the article are his own and not those of any US government agency, said the US military needs first to study the war-fighting methods of Islam’s central figure, something it has not done to date.

“Mohammad, both in his capacity as a military and religious leader, established a strategic objective of political (as well as religious) imperium and he left behind a rudimentary war-fighting doctrine articulated in the Koran [sic], elaborated on in the Haddiths [sic], codified in Islamic Law and reinforced by current interpretations in the modern era,” Mr. Gawthrop said.

“As late as early 2006, the senior service colleges of the Department of Defense had not incorporated into their curriculum a systematic study of Mohammad as a

military or political leader. As a consequence, we still do not have an in-depth understanding of the war fighting doctrine laid down by Mohammad, how it might be applied today by an increasing number of Islamic groups, or how it might be countered.”

Mr. Gawthrop calls for developing an ideological counter to Islamic extremism and for the United States, moderate Muslim governments, and the non-Muslim world to wage ideological war on the extremists.

“Presently the adversary has the upper hand in using a global network of information outlets capable of delivering Islamic themes penetrating otherwise inaccessible recesses of the Islamic community,” he said.²³⁶

The *Mushriks* Have Deadened Themselves to the Truth

Taking this context into consideration and placing these meanings where they belong in the real world, the committed Muslims in the company of these *āyāt* make the transition to *al-dār al-ākhirah* (the ultimate domicile) to watch the fallout of the *mushriks* who jested about Allah’s (ﷻ) authority and laws in the earlier planetary world. The following *āyāt* capture a scene on the Day of Resurrection, focussing on these *dunyā* big-shots who were, at the time, listening to the Qur’an, but elicited no response. The natural human and perceptual instinct in their “life of accountability” was unhinged because of their decision to “tune out” Allah (ﷻ) when He was speaking to them.

Any Muslim in this world who has exerted himself to the point of “burning out” so that Allah’s (ﷻ) will glows is going to remember these worldly *mushriks* and how self-satisfied they projected themselves to be in their narrow-mindedness when Allah’s scripture and Apostle (ﷺ) were brought to their attention. Our memories will see them on that Day as they were in this worldly life: how they would argue with Rasūl-Allāh (ﷺ) and how they would sermonize their secularism and model their materialism in a past world where they thought “they would be able to get away with it.” In this Qur’an, we

meet our memories on that Day of Truth; we see how the past will turn up their claims of the Qur'an being the stuff of superstitions, and how their strategies to develop a public trend of thought and mass mentality had the effects of "turning people off" whenever Allah (ﷻ), the Prophet (ﷺ), and the Qur'an were mentioned.

Herein, the flowing *āyāt* reveal the true selves of these diehard *mushriks*. They are portrayed as vividly as life itself, as they stand helpless and hopeless in front of the Fire, which will burn any expectation or aspiration in the air. Here is where these *mushriks* meet reality and they will do so with misery and forlornness. These mighty and materialistic *mushriks* in the world of dirt are now, on the Day of Honesty, depressed and dejected. This is the moment when they will wish to return to the *dunyā* so as to change their positions and disavow their actions, all of which led them to where they are now. But the divine reply is devastating and mortifying. The final and miserable disposition of these *mushriks* comes alive via the eternal and captivating words of Allah (ﷻ),

And of them are some who would [ostensibly] listen to you [O Muhammad]. And We placed over their hearts membranes that preclude them from grasping the truth, and into their ears, word-deafness. And were they to see every signal [of the truth], they would still not commit to it — so much so that when they come to you to contend with you, those who are in denial say, "This is nothing but fables of ancient times!" And they repel others therefrom, and distance themselves from it: [in doing so] they destroy none but themselves, and perceive it not.

If you could but see [them — the *mushriks*] when they will be brought to brook the Fire and will say, "Oh, if only we were returned [to worldly life], then we would not take issue with our Sustainer [His power presence therein] and in that way commit ourselves [to Him]! But no — [they will say this only because] the truth they used to conceal [from themselves and others]

in the past will have become obvious to them [on this Day]; and if they were returned [to earthly life], they would return to the very thing that was disallowed to them: for, behold, they are unfeignedly liars (6:25–28).

This puts us in the larger picture of reality. We are here in this world and we are also there in the oncoming world. The juxtaposition of locations could not be more pronounced. We experience how the *mushriks* are recalcitrant and stiff-necked in this lifetime and correspondingly we see how troubled and haunted they are in the arriving life. The correlating imagery here is brought to life in this spirited Scripture. The analogy is intriguing. The human mind and human nature, without outside interference by the status-quo power centers of the world, would have to be moved by this comparison and parallel.

And there are within them [*mushriks*] those who will [apparently] listen in on what you [Muhammad] have to say. Rather We have placed a pall over their hearts and souls that debars them from grasping the truth and [We placed] mind-deafness in their ears. And [so] if they see an *āyah* [Allah's power manifestation] they will not postulate it [the *āyah*'s significance] (6:25).

When Allah (ﷻ) says He has placed a pall or a drape on the hearts of such *mushriks*, it should immediately be understood that He did not *impose* this barrier to their understanding the truth of His legitimacy, authority, and power. Rather, this curtain was made to descend, by virtue of His social law, over their hearts (locus of perception) because they did anything and everything conceivable for their hearts to shut off when Allah (ﷻ) speaks. The same goes for the deafness — partial or complete loss of processing the truth when they hear it. The committed Muslims have to understand that life will be encumbered by encounters with this class of people, who, even when presented with the unvarnished truth or the truth made palatable to their level of understanding, will not accept it. En-

trenching themselves so deeply in a psychology that rejects the authority and sovereignty of Allah (ﷻ), their capacity to understand the God-given facts becomes nonexistent. They seem not to be able to distinguish the genuineness of Allah's (ﷻ) authority from the disingenuousness of temporal authorities. Their emotional capacity for interacting with this organic and universal truth is shunted.

These types of people are endemic to every generation. They are to be found in ancient history, in current history, and in future times. They lack a mindfulness, a consciousness, and a cautiousness for Allah (ﷻ) being the only and the just authority for man. They are descendants of Adam (ﷺ), and so they look like average people; they appear to be perfectly normal so long as this subject is not broached. However, when they are apprised of the fact of Allah's (ﷻ) authority they act as if they heard nothing: they shut down, they shut off, or they may even shut up. The reality of the matter is that they are almost inexplicably aloof and disconnected,

And were they to see every *āyah* [disclosing the truth about Allah's power presence in human affairs], they still would not commit to it, so much so that when they come to you [O Muhammad] to argue with you, those who are in denial [of Allah's power] say, "This is nothing but fables of ancient times!" (6:25).

Why, after all these centuries of reading the Qur'an and suffering the consequences of not abiding by its counsel, is it so hard for Muslims to learn this lesson? There are literally people of *shirk* who will see with their own eyes and equally deny with their own hearts, as if they visualize but do not internalize, or they observe but do not understand, or they get a present from Allah (ﷻ) but do not unwrap it.

What are such people like on the inside? What makes them impervious, unresponsive, or unaffected by Allah's (ﷻ) working words and His wonderful will, even though they have eyes, ears, and hearts? And the Most High provides the answer,

But over their hearts We have placed coatings that forestall them from gripping the truth, and in their ears [We have put] a deafness [to reason]. And [even] if they were to visualize an *āyah* they [still] would not believe [in its intents and purposes] (6:26).

This simply means that the *mushriks*' addiction to false ideas about God has assuredly resulted in His sealing off their sensory perceptivity and stamping out their receptivity to truth. The *ḥaqq* to them is illusive, surreal, or fictional. So far as they are concerned, there is no real content in the Qur'an and this Prophet (ﷺ). Allah's emissaries (ﷺ) could perform all manner of wonders, miracles, and supernatural things by His leave, yet their (limited) network of information and mental attitude will dismiss all of it, saying it is magic or some type of incomprehensible feat.

Contrasted with the *mushriks*, whose senses are behind material bars, are those who are simultaneously worldly-wise and bright-eyed to the spirit and function of the revealed *āyāt*. A defining distinction between these two diverse classes of people is that the latter have a responsiveness cultivated by an exercise formulated to sharpen the senses to Allah's communication: the ongoing struggle for Allah (ﷻ), **"...and those who struggle exclusively for Us, We will guide them to Our ways" (29:69)**. This integrates Muslim senses with Islamic struggle; there is a relationship between the quality of the Muslims' struggle and the quantity of their perception in their relationship with Allah (ﷻ). Attention here should be directed to some other revealing *āyāt*,

Consider the human self, and He [Allah] who has equilibrated and coordinated it; thus imbuing it with [its potential for] recklessness [against Allah] and with [its potential for] preventive action [against the due power of Allah]. Successful is he who causes it to flourish [heavenward], and truly lost is he who smotherers it [in opacity] (91:7–10).

This is the key to perception acuity or deep understanding. These Qur'anic words of wisdom begin to seep into the human conscience and penetrate the human mind when this human being is involved in the world he lives in for the purpose of aligning it and subjecting it to Allah's (ﷻ) authority. The fact of the matter here is that the *mushriks* are not involved in any relationship or activity pertaining to God, therefore God is not going to be ready or willing to receive them. It appears that the *mushriks* are dysfunctional at the intuitive and elemental level. They were not born with some kind of genetic defect; rather they did this to themselves by consciously, willingly, deliberately, and intentionally deciding to exclude God, the Authority, from their lives, from public life, and from any activities in life. For this reason they are imbecilic and dimwitted when it comes to Allah (ﷻ), revelation, and prophet. These personal and social laws work according to the variables, criteria, and standards set up by Allah (ﷻ); thus the people who are open-minded and struggle to seek Allah's (ﷻ) favor will gain positive results, while those who disregarded Him and deflect from Him will accumulate repercussions.

Allah (ﷻ) is not the one who misguides or misleads people. It is their own deviant actions that breed digression and waywardness. To those who are narcissistic enough to blame Allah (ﷻ) for their depravities and deviance, He responds,

The *mushriks* say, “Had Allah willed it we would not have conformed to others besides Him, neither us nor our ancestors; and we would not have prohibited, in contradiction to Him, such things as we have.” That has been the behavioral pattern of those before them; but, then, are apostles liable for anything except to communicate clearly? We have dispatched to every *ummaḥ* an apostle [saying], “Conform to Allah and banish *ṭāghūt* [excessive and abusive power].” [Consequently] some of them were guided by Allah, and some of them incurred misguidance: go, then, into the world and note the outcome of those who lied [about Allah] (16:35–36).

Theological Back and Forth between Free Will and Fatalism

The above Qur'anic narrative touches on the issue of what is called in non-Qur'anic scriptural circles *predestination*. In Christian theology, this doctrine asserts that the ultimate salvation or damnation of each human individual has been ordained beforehand, in other words, that God has eternally chosen those whom He intends to save. A source of endless dispute, the doctrine has been interpreted in many ways. It was first fully articulated by St. Augustine during his controversy with the Pelagians, who upheld the doctrine of free will. The Protestant reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin defended the doctrine, though in varying degrees. Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609) rejected the Calvinist view of predestination, and argued that divine sovereignty was compatible with human free will.²³⁷

The scripturally-detached modes of thought and diversions continue to generate points of view on this subject, one of which is *free will*. This concept has generated a famous philosophical problem: is our everyday assumption that we are free agents, able to do this or not to do that at will, compatible with the view that every event has a cause? Free will is generally supposed to be a precondition for moral responsibility, so the question has implications for ethics, theology, and the scientific view of the world.²³⁸

There are yet more arguments. *Causal determinism* is the philosophical thesis that every event has a cause, so that, given the laws of nature and the relevant previous history of the world, the event could not have failed to occur, and could in principle have been predicted. Philosophers have disagreed about whether causal determinism is compatible with free will or is undermined by quantum theory. *Logical determinism* is the apparently stronger thesis that the laws of nature alone necessitate every event; it is contradictory to conceive of anything as being different from what it is. *Theological determinism*, held by Calvin and others, maintains that God predestines everything in creation. This mind-centered and scripturally lazy context goes on to talk about *fatalism*, the philosophical doctrine that the future is as unalterable as the past, that what will be will be, no matter what a person may do or not do to affect it. Fa-

talists in general are deterministic, but not all versions of determinism entail fatalism.²³⁹

Free will, the power or capacity within people to choose among alternatives or to act in certain situations independently of natural, social, or divine restraints, is denied by those who espouse any of the various forms of determinism. Arguments for free will are based on the subjective experience of freedom, on sentiments of guilt, on certain understandings of revealed religion, and on the universal supposition of responsibility for personal actions that underlies the concepts of law, reward, punishment, and incentive. In theology, the existence of free will must be reconciled with God's omniscience and goodness (in allowing humans to choose badly), and with divine grace, which is held to be necessary for any meritorious act.²⁴⁰

Muslims have been influenced by the tug-of-war arguments pertaining to free will and predestination. The Christian view of it has been briefly described above. In modern usage, predestination is distinct from both determinism and fatalism, and is subject to the free decision of the human moral will; but, like the Christian view, the doctrine also teaches that salvation is due entirely to the eternal decree of God. In its fundamentals, the problem of predestination is as universal as "religion" itself, but the emphasis of the New Testament on the divine plan of salvation has made the issue especially prominent in Christian theology.²⁴¹

Paul the Apostle stated,

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Romans, 8:29–30).

Three types of predestination doctrine, with many variations, have developed subsequently. One theory, associated with semi-Pelagianism, some forms of nominalism, and Arminianism, makes

foreknowledge the ground of predestination and teaches that God predestined to salvation those whose future faith and merits He foreknew. At the opposite extreme is the doctrine of double predestination, commonly identified with John Calvin, but more correctly associated with the Synod of Dort (1618–1619), and appearing also in some of the writings of St. Augustine and Martin Luther, and in the thought of Jansenists. According to this doctrine, God has determined from eternity whom He will save and whom He will damn, regardless of their merit or lack thereof. A third doctrine was set forth in other writings of St. Augustine and Martin Luther, in the decrees of the Second Council of Orange (529CE), and in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. It ascribes the salvation of man to the unmerited grace of God and thus to predestination, but it attributes divine reprobation to man's sin and guilt.²⁴²

In Jewish understanding, fatalism is the belief that all things have a fixed destiny over which man has no control. This belief, having had wide circulation in the ancient world, is still important in the religions of India and some Islamic schools of thought. Biblical teaching can be adduced both for (Deuteronomy, 30:19) and against (Exodus, 7:3) free will. The Pharisees taught that “all things are in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven,”²⁴³ meaning that man has free will and can determine his actions within certain limits, and an unfavorable divine decree can be modified by “penitence, prayer, and charity.” This represented a moderate position between the extremes held by the other Jewish sects, the Sadducees and Essenes, as described by Josephus. The former denied divine interference in human affairs, while the latter held it to be the controlling force in every aspect of life. Maimonides pointed out that whereas man is born with certain tendencies, his acts are entirely under his own control, and a fatalistic approach would make meaningless the commandments and the doctrine of reward and punishment. In antiquity and the European Middle Ages, fatalism was often identical with astrological beliefs in determinism by the stars. The rabbinic negations of fatalism therefore often took the form of denying the power of the stars over Israel, which is subject to the exclusive province of God.²⁴⁴

Does this mean that the conventional Jewish position on free will is the ability to decide upon a course of action independent of divine or material determination or predestination? The Jewish point of view is that freedom of decision definitely exists with regard to moral and spiritual conduct. Scripture emphasizes the power of the individual to choose between the good and the bad, the concepts of punishment and reward being postulated upon freedom of will in this respect. The Talmud posits divine omniscience in all matters but unequivocally states that man has the power to choose his own way of moral living. Thus, although everything occurs by divine decree, “everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven.” The rabbis did not discuss the apparent contradiction between free will and divine omniscience and providence, but Jewish philosophers in the Middle Ages, influenced by the treatment of the problem among the Islamic schools of thought, paid much attention to it and offered various solutions. Some Jewish scholars, such as Saadiah Gaon and Judah Ha-Levi, limited omniscience, holding that only after man’s will is made up does it become part of divine knowledge. Others, Crescas in particular, limited freedom of will. Maimonides differentiated between the human concept of knowledge and divine knowledge, holding that man can no more understand the nature of God’s knowledge than he can His essence.²⁴⁵

Within Islamic scholarship, there are also diverse positions on the subjects of free will, predestination, and fatalism. If these were to be divided into two broad categories, the first set of at-large notions among Muslims at the present time could be captured by the word *maktūb* (literally, *written*; figuratively, *ordained*) in the sense of “it is written,” an expression pronounced frequently in resignation to Allah’s (ﷻ) providence. It refers to the divine decrees written on *al-lawḥ al-mahfūz* (*the guarded tablet*), and to such Qur’anic statements as, “**There befalls not any happening in the earth or in your souls except it is in a book (*kitāb*) before We [Allah] manifest it**” (57:22). Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh says in his *al-Ḥikam*, “Antecedent motivations (*sawābiq al-himam*) cannot pierce the walls of predestined decrees (*aswār al-aqdār*).”²⁴⁶

While there is an understanding within Islam that views man's life as predestined in the sense that nothing can finally oppose the Will of Allah (ﷻ), man nonetheless has the gift of free will in that he does make choices and decisions. Resignation to Allah's (ﷻ) will is concomitant to striving in His path. Above all, man is completely free in what is essential, that is, he can accept the Absolute and surrender himself to Him, or reject God and pay the price. In this he has absolute free will.

The second category is represented by a strain of *qadariyah* in Islamic literature (from the Arabic word *qadar* for *power* or *will*), those who upheld the notion of free will against the advocates of predestination (the *Jabriyah*) in Islam's early theological debates. A solution to the problem of free will and determinism was sketched out by the Ash'arīs in their theory of man's acquisition of acts that originate with Allah (ﷻ). Later, the mystics (Sufis) proposed an antinomian (by God's will man is freed of the damning consequences of his actions) solution to the problem that alluded to the individual indeed possessing free will, and thus being responsible for his decisions, but his making these decisions, which are seen in time, nevertheless ultimately fulfills a destiny determined outside time. In other words, they contended that although divine will determines all things, the freedom of human will lies in its capacity to choose, or to deny, the Absolute. In any case, the word *qadar* here points to *capacity*, implying limitation, and thus destiny; that is, the word for *will* and *destiny* is in fact one and the same. For this reason, *qadar* has sometimes taken on the opposite — deterministic — meaning. Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh said,

To soften for you the suffering of affliction, He has taught you that He is the One who causes trials to come upon you. For the one who confronts you with His decrees of Fate is the same Who has accustomed you to His good choice.²⁴⁷

And Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī said, “If we let fly an arrow, that action is not from us: we are only the bow, and the shooter of the arrow is

Allah.”²⁴⁸ Finally, feeding into this contestation of free will versus fatalism is the notion of *kismet* (from the Arabic word *qismaḥ* for *part*, *portion*, or *lot*). This word for *fate* made its way into European languages from Arabicized Persian through Turkish.

Skimming through the various ups and downs, ins and outs, and for-and-against opinions pertaining to this notion of how far man’s will goes before he realizes the presence of Allah’s (ﷻ) will, or conversely, how prevalent Allah’s (ﷻ) will is before man realizes the presence of his own will therein, reveals that this matter has been bouncing back and forth in the philosophical circles of scripture for a long time. Islamic literature, too, contains terms like *al-qadar wa-al-qaḍā’* (will versus fate), *al-jabr wa-al-ikhtiyār* (predestination versus free will), *irādaḥ al-‘abdi wa-kasbuhū* (cause and effect). All these themes and sub-themes occur ubiquitously in theological argumentation, which in essence is a product of man’s observations, assumptions, and calculations. In all this intellectual twisting and turning, there appears to be scant reference to the conclusive Qur’anic statements on the matter. In this writer’s understanding of the Qur’an, to put it succinctly: everything happens in accordance with Allah’s (ﷻ) *qadar* (power and proportion). Man’s choices and actions take place within a human nature and latitude that is established by Allah (ﷻ). It is Allah’s (ﷻ) determination that configured man’s human options. It is after man decides on one course or another in life that he prompts the ensuing results of his choice and setting. These results or consequences, which are regulated by Allah’s (ﷻ) design of things, are two-fold: in this world and in the one to follow. In this sense, nothing — absolutely nothing — happens or develops without the involvement or enfolding of Allah (ﷻ) as man picks his personal or social course of action along the timeline of his life span.

Man has freedom of choice, but that freedom is not absolute. It is contingent upon the possibilities attached to its functionality. So, when man does choose a course of action he bears the whole range of responsibilities and consequences contingent upon and flowing from that particular choice. There does not appear to be a convincing argument for Allah imposing His will on man, nor one

for man doing whatever he wants to without the eventual or immediate presence of Allah’s (ﷻ) power in the affairs of his personal or social choices.

In the relevant events of this world and the urgent meanings of the Qur’an, that the *mushriks* chose to omit and even wage war against anything that smacks of God’s authority is well-known. Throughout the thousands of years of history, prophets and scriptures came to humanity one after the other. The struggle to work God’s will would not have been that were it not for the opposition of vested interests to scripture and their animosity against these prophets and apostles. Similarly, the central theme of the Qur’an itself (and the point of departure for the *mushriks* and *kāfirs*) is Allah’s (ﷻ) authority and His sole sovereignty. If there are people who are willing to respond to Him, so much the better for them and their societies. As for those who choose to turn against Allah (ﷻ), of course they have the liberty to do that, but not without the contiguous consequences as well as the final judgement that accrue to their misguided decision.

***Mushriks* Disingenuously Say the Qur’an Is Mythology**

In this worldly setting and historical scope, some people have chosen to offend Allah (ﷻ) in His essence — if such a thing is even conceivable. They felt inclined to denigrate His Majesty and to degrade His Authority. But when man himself is not motivated to respond to Allah, to carry out His will, then this type of man will not be able to move forward with Allah’s (ﷻ) counsel. Governors and legislators, rulers and executives who make decisions without reference to Allah (ﷻ) and His scripture are setting themselves up for the ensuing results. And the first repercussion is that Allah (ﷻ) is not receptive to them when they are not receptive to Him. Therefore, when they are presented with a scripture and are in the presence of a prophet, they act as if nothing is happening. Though they should be biased and partial in this direction, they are completely unmoved. They have their minds made up, not wanting to be bothered by “words of wisdom” that do not fit into their agenda

and scheme of things. They are indifferent toward Allah (ﷻ) but very passionate about their interests — economic, financial, and monetary before and after all. This may explain the following *āyāt*,

Behold how they have lied to themselves — and [how] their false imagery has forsaken them! And there are among them such as [seem to] listen to you [O Prophet], but over their hearts We have laid shrouds that prevent them from grasping the truth [of Allah’s power and authority] and into their ears deafness. And were they to see every sign [of the truth of Allah’s power], they would still not commit to it — so much so that when they come to contend with you, those who are bent on denying the truth [of Allah’s power presence] say, “This is nothing but fictions of ancient times!” (6:24–25).

This is one of those “turn them off” statements that usually comes out of officialdom, but may be parroted by other quarters; it seeks to discredit scripture by lumping it into the general domain of mythologies. Most cultures, or at least the ones that have survived over extended periods of time, have evolved their own mythologies, which offer a way of understanding the world, and to a lesser or greater extent, define their character. Greek, Celtic (Indo-European, including Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, Breton, Manx, Cornish, and Gaulish), and Norse (Scandinavian) legends form the core of European mythological thought. Myths from the Middle East include those of the Sumerians and Babylonians; the ancient Iranians and Egyptians; and the Canaanites and Hebrews. There are also myths and superstitions in South and Central Asia with their Hindu and Buddhist peculiarities in India, Sri Lanka, Tibet, and Nepal. Given that the intellectual non-starter of myths and superstitions is to be found all around the globe, it has been convenient for the powers that be to use this position to try to discredit or dispose of authentic scripture whenever it suits their purpose of dominion over other men.

Anyone at the time of its revelation, and now, who would take a rational and objective look at the Qur'an would have to immediately conclude that it is not a book of myths and superstitions. At issue here is not whether the Qur'an can be confused with myths, but rather that the elites who are preoccupied with preserving their special interests want to make it appear so in their drive to steal away or "smash" Allah's (ﷻ) authority. Given that logic and common sense would easily delegitimize their position, they simply toss them aside in their zeal to contrive any accusation against Muhammad (ﷺ) and this valuable Writ.

As the Qur'an was coming down from heaven, such people were hearing that in it were stories about historical figures, narratives of ancient civilizations, and accounts of prophets and apostles from times past. So, the most convenient approach for them to be able to serve their materialistic purposes and blunt this heavenly Script was to say, through the agency of all the available media and with the congruent consistency of programming, **"This [Qur'an] is nothing but a fiction of ancient times!"** Man has been given the free will to oppose God; therefore, he has the capacity to turn on his Creator and Authority. The Qur'an, in these *āyāt*, gives its readers a visual image of the deliberate human attempt to classify this eternal Scripture as a type of mythology.

Myths are the traditional stories of a people, often orally transmitted. They usually tell of unbelievable things in a deliberate manner, so that a *myth* can mean both *an untrue story*, and *a story containing religious truth*. The subject matter of myths is either the gods and their relations with human or other beings, or complex explanations of physical phenomena. Until recently, *mythology* typically alluded to Greek mythology, which is distinct in its concentration on stories of heroes and heroines, and its avoidance of the bizarre episodes in contemporary Middle Eastern myths. Greek mythology was largely derived from Homer; it referred to a specific historical period (before the Trojan War); and it was, to a certain extent, rationalized and beautified by later writers. The use of this mythology in Elizabethan and Romantic poetry indicates a wish to break out of narrowly Christian patterns of behavior. Some writers,

such as Blake, Tolkien, and Yeats, have created mythical systems of their own by synthesizing disparate materials. Recent scholarship has been either folklorist or structuralist, finding unexpected parallels in myths from widely different sources, and showing their function in determining social behavior.²⁴⁹

Trying to fit this timeless Qur'an into a bracket of myths is the occupation of those in the dominant power culture who want to distract the world's public mind from discovering the core Qur'anic communication concerning Allah's (ﷻ) authority. The purpose of these *mushrik* elites and power classes is to prevent the average person from gaining a healthy interest in the Qur'an, **“And they bar others therefrom, and go far away from it: but they destroy none but themselves, and perceive it not.”** These inner circles of power may know as a certainty that the Qur'an cannot be a book of mythology; they also know that it is appealing, having the magnetic quality of drawing people to its message. This is why the only classes of people who are afraid of this Qur'an are the financial and power classes of society. Not being able to manufacture a “filter” of sorts that would give the Qur'an a “Qurayshī” twist, the Quraysh was afraid of ordinary people listening to the Qur'an as it was promulgated by the Prophet (ﷺ); so the Qurayshī higher society would advise its rank and file not to listen to the Qur'an. The following narrative demonstrates the Qur'an's power over its listeners, even the ones who were its avowed enemies,

‘Utbaḥ ibn Rabī‘aḥ went on an appeasement assignment to the Prophet (ﷺ) on behalf of Quraysh. He offered the Prophet the position of, what may be called today, chief executive of the Qurayshī elite, or a position of dominance in the Makkan power structure; or, alternatively, wealth galore. Or if he [the Prophet] was possessed by spirits, they would bring him a physician who could cure him. After this proposition, the Prophet (ﷺ) answered him by reciting respective verses from the beginning of *Sūrah Fuṣṣilat* (*Clearly Spelled Out*), **“Hā-Mīm. The bestowal from on high [of this revelation] issues from the**

Mercy-Giving, the Dispenser of Grace...” (41:1–2). After hearing these *āyāt*, ‘Utbaḥ went back to his Qurayshī crowd and colleagues and said, “Folks! You have to listen to me concerning this issue! And choose to disregard anything else I may say. By Allah! I have listened to some words from this man [Muhammad] that my ears have never ever before heard the likes of. And I didn’t know how to respond to him.”²⁵⁰

Some of these *mushriks* wanted to listen to the Qur’an, not to understand and reason through it, but to try to take all measures to combat and defeat it. In the books of *Siraḥ* there is a telling incident about the sneaky tactics employed by the Makkan *mushriks*,

Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb, Abū Jahl, and al-Akhnas ibn Shurayq ibn Wahb al-Thaqafī went out one night to listen to the Prophet (ﷺ) recite the Qur’an as he was in his devotional moments at home. Each one of them took to a particular place around the residence of the Prophet — a place unknown to the other two. They stayed there for a while listening to the recited Qur’an, [but] at the onset of *fajr* they left. On their way back they converged upon each other, and at this moment advised each other not to go back and listen to him. They also said that if any of the commoners were to see or know what they had been doing, the latter probably would have second thoughts about the former and favorable thoughts about Muhammad. They did this for three nights, and each night was a carbon copy of the previous one: listening to the Prophet (ﷺ) reciting the Qur’an, leaving, meeting somewhere on the road back, and counseling each other never to let anyone know of this.²⁵¹

This behavior was brought out into the open by Allah’s (ﷻ) words in the Qur’an, “**And those who are in denial [of Allah’s authority and power] said [to one another], ‘Do not listen to this**

Qur'an, but rather talk frivolously about it, so that you might gain the upper hand!'” (41:26). Later on, al-Akhnas ibn Shurayq asked Abū Sufyān about his impressions after the latter had listened to the words of the Qur'an, and their exchange has been recorded as follows,

[Al-Akhnas inquired], “Tell me, O Abū Ḥanzalah [Abū Sufyān], about your opinion after having heard what you heard from Muhammad.” He replied, “O Abū Tha‘labah [al-Akhnas]! I swear by Allah that I heard things I know about and I know what is intended by it. And I heard things that I do not understand and I do not understand its intent. Al-Akhnas said, “So did I.” Then al-Akhnas left Abū Sufyān, and along the way, encountered Abū Jahl, and also inquired [of the latter], “O Abū al-Ḥakam [Abū Jahl]! What is your opinion about what you heard from Muhammad? He [Abū Jahl] said, “We and Banū ‘Abd Manāf were competing for status. If they fed people, we would also feed people. They would extend assistance to others and we would too. They would give to those in need and we would do the same. We were in sharp competition. Then they said, ‘But from us shall come a prophet who will receive revelation from heaven’; and how could we match that? We will never believe him nor commit to him.”²⁵²

All this effort to draw people’s attention away from the Qur'an and to provide canny diversions away from its meanings is as true today as it was then. In real contemporary life, the Qur'an is targeted by its *mushrik* enemies on a number of subjects — all of which by the way are interpreted and “explained,” not by Muslims who are enlightened and informed, but by the wily *mushriks* themselves. By virtue of their media control, they are spreading false information about the Qur'an on the following subjects: adultery, alcohol, whether the Qur'an is created or eternal, divorce, gambling, interpretation of the Qur'an, the Jews, jihad, judgement on

“infidels,” literalism, martyrs’ rewards, mercy, the Qur’an as perfect, pleasures in the Qur’an, poetry, polygamy, punishments, sexual rights, slavery, the Sunnah, theft, translations of the Qur’an, and finally, women. All the cherry-picking explanations of these subjects are used by these *mushriks* in a frantic way only because they sense that the Muslims of today are moving closer to reinstating Allah’s (ﷻ) authority in the affairs of man. By detracting from Allah and His authority as exemplified by His Prophet (ﷺ) and holy Writ, these *mushriks* are doing themselves a disservice. All of their outrageous efforts will rebound on them, and the effect will be devastating, “...but they destroy none but themselves, and perceive it not.”

These big shots, kingpins, and chief executives, even though they are surrounded by all the fanfare of power and celebrated by all the imagery of status, are in their visceral selves wretched, stunted, and self-destructive. Those who are more attuned to the power of Allah (ﷻ) sometimes feel sorry for these miserable souls and counterproductive minds. The high-end clothes adorning their bodies, the reinforced armor encasing their gathering places and national boundaries, and the manicured facade of their personas cannot hide the fact that they are pathetic and disastrous. They will not have gained anything after having lost their own souls in this life and in the life to come. No amount of military buildup or cosmetic makeup is going to disguise their true selves,

If you could but see [them] when they will be made to stand before the Fire and will say, “Oh, would that we were brought back [to life]: then we would not give the lie to our Sustainer’s [power] messages, but would be among the committed Muslims (6:27).

This view of them standing at the brink of Hell dovetails in a sarcastic way with their standing on the frontier of expansion and status in this world. Here, they were arrogant, disdainful, scornful, and imperious, while, there, they will be small, menial, demoralized, and self-deprecating. The extent of their aggression, compulsion,

and belligerence in the *dunyā* will match the depth of their fear, disconsolation, and humiliation in the *ākhirah*. Anyone looking at them in that abject and shipwrecked condition at the threshold of the Fire would not be able to escape acknowledging their utter inability to do anything. They will not be able to argue away or silence their opponents, as they routinely did in this earthly life, **“Only see them as they stand at the doorstep of the Fire...”** This caption should be enough to make people throw off their hubris and attach to Allah (ﷻ), **“Oh, would that we were brought back [to life]: then we would not give the lie to our Sustainer’s *āyāt*, but would be among the committed Muslims.”**

On the brink of the Fire on that Day is the wrong time and place for them to say **“...our Sustainer’s *āyāt*”**; where were they when they had the temporal opportunity to affirm these words? It is their well-earned fear of the impending punishment that makes them wish for a return to the *dunyā*, for another “shot at it.” This approach of theirs indicates that they do not know their own selves. They spent a lifetime proving how fierce, how bloody, and how criminal they could be in opposing, defying, and warring against Allah’s (ﷻ) authority and against those who were trying to affirm His authority — and they felt not a shred of contrition for their unbecoming behavior. So when they are expressing their willingness to go back to the *dunyā* and become committed Muslims, they are still thinking they can bargain their way out of their predicament, but now it is too late, and it is all over; this is the wrong time for the type of wrangling and swindling that fooled their worldly constituents and followers. They cannot dupe anyone anymore for any amount of time. Their tricks, and the ideologies that were wrapped around their tricks, were all left behind in a world and in a past that condemns their actions and enterprise, all of which were centered around delegitimizing the authority of Allah (ﷻ) and giving credibility and power to their self-made, self-tailored, and self-serving authorities,

But no — [they will say this only because] the truth they used to conceal [from themselves and others

about Allah's authority] in the past will have become obvious to them; and if they were brought back [to life], they would return to the very thing that was deemed illegitimate [by Allah] for them: for, behold, they are indeed liars! (6:28).

Obviously, Allah (ﷻ) knows them very well. And He knows how deadly serious they were about their confrontation with Him as their one and only Authority. He also knows that it took an eye-witness view of the Fire for them to finally acknowledge what in their hearts they could never reconcile in the preceding worldly life. Wishful thinking is not enough in this world; how can it be enough in the ultimate world?

On Resurrection

In the coming *āyah*, the *mushriks'* duplicity is once again on display. Allah's (ﷻ) words scan their positions in the world as compared to their feeble attempts to defend themselves in the *ākhirah*. One of these positions, in the yesteryear world of materialism, concerns their emphatic denial of resurrection and life-restoration. They would brook no discussion about accountability and restitution on a final day of judgement. Their corresponding position on Judgement Day is brought to light when they find themselves in front of their Sustainer who asks them about their current condition, **“Is not this the *ḥaqq*?”** A question like this coming from Allah (ﷻ) is enough to shatter any soul and tremble any nerves, and these *mushriks*, who were unflappable on earth, will be no different; they will have no recourse to the arrogance that earlier served them so well. Listen to their scandalous yet humbling answer, **“Yes, of course, by our Sustainer...”** At that time they will be advised of their due payoff. The words of this well-timed Qur'an divulge their images as the final hour takes them by surprise, after their refusal to accept anything about an eventual return or encounter with Allah (ﷻ). They will be consumed by regret and sorrow as they will have to bear the burden of their own sins loaded as stacks on their own backs.

Their fleeting pride and pomposity blinded them to the fact that earthly life had to be lived in a preparatory mode for the permanent life to come, and thereby to attach to it the vainglory of self-importance is nothing but jest and amusement. The definitive life is the one that people should yearn to live, but it is only accessible to the *muttaqīs*, that is, those who were always making decisions with the certitude that Allah (ﷻ) is the only authority and His is the only power. The scale definitely tips in favor of those who realize how important the *ākhirah* (the final life) is and how trivial the *ūlā* (the initial life) was,

And they said, “But it is only our earthly life [that counts] and we shall never be resurrected!” Yet, see them as they are brought to stand in the presence of their Sustainer who says, “Is this not the *ḥaqq*?” They will say, “By Allah, of course it is.” [Whereupon] He will say, “Taste the torment that comes to you due to your denial [of Allah’s power and authority”].

Those who declared untrue [in worldly times] the ultimate encounter with their Sustainer are at loss — for when the Final Hour comes to them as a surprise they say, “How sorrowful we are to have been deficient [in earthly times]” — and they carry their own sins upon their backs: oh, how woeful and burdensome the load [of sins they bear].

And nothing is the life of this world but a child’s play and floorshow; and the eventual abode is by far the better for all who are conscious of Allah [His powerful authority]. Will you not, then, decide by reasoning? (6:29–32).

Resurrection, accountability, and restitution on the Day of Judgement and in the end-life is an essential component of revelation and scripture. This fact is central to man’s relationship with Allah (ﷻ) and in his approach to Him. It figures into his morals, behavior, organizations, and social programs. Resurrection is the

certainty that at the end of time the bodies of the dead will rise from their graves. Belief in resurrection was adopted by postexilic Judaism (after the Babylonian exile, circa 538–332BCE), particularly by the Pharisees, although rejected by the Sadducees. The Talmud teaches belief in resurrection as a fundamental of the Jewish faith, and Maimonides incorporated it into his *Thirteen Principles of Faith*. Its denial was, in today’s Jewish understanding of Judaism, generally considered as heresy until the modern period when various Reform prayer-books substituted phrases like “eternal life” for the earlier references to resurrection. Although belief in resurrection seems to contradict immortality in the contemporary intra-Jewish discourse, the two views were combined in Jewish as well as in Christian orthodoxy.

Resurrection in Judeo-Christian doctrines is a form or re-animation of a person after death, the belief in which can be traced to late biblical Judaism and early Christianity. The nature of the new corporeality, the timing of the transformation, and the matter of whether all people would be raised from the dead or only the “just” have been variously expressed in Jewish and Christian literature, but the emphasis on some form of revival of the body after death is distinct from many views about the immortality of the soul.

Resurrection is the rising from the dead of a human or jinn who still retains his own personhood, or individuality, but whose body may or may not be changed. In the West, the belief in resurrection is usually associated with Christianity, because of the doctrine of the Resurrection of Christ, but it is also associated with later Judaism, which provided basic ideas that were later expanded by some denominations of Christianity.

The expectation of the resurrection of the dead is found in several Old Testament works. In the Book of Ezekiel, there is an anticipation that the righteous Israelis will rise from the dead. The Book of Daniel further developed the hope of resurrection with both the righteous and unrighteous Israelis being raised from the dead, after which will occur a judgement, with the righteous participating in an eternal messianic kingdom and the unrighteous being excluded from that kingdom. In some inter-testamental literature,

such as *The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*, there is an expectation of a universal resurrection at the advent of the Messiah.²⁵³

The Resurrection of Christ, a central doctrine of Christianity, is based on the belief that Jesus Christ (ﷺ) was raised from the dead on the third day after his “crucifixion” and that through his conquering of death all believers will subsequently share in his victory over “sin, death, and the Devil.” The celebration of this event, called Easter, or the Festival of the Resurrection, is the major feast day of the church.²⁵⁴

The doctrine of the resurrection of the bodies from the graves (*ba'th, nushūr*), and their reuniting with souls to face the great judgement is a fundamental dogma of Islam. It is much insisted upon in the holy Qur'an, and is present in numerous creeds apart from Islam. In a couple of the many *āyāt* about resurrection in the sacred Qur'an, there occur the following descriptions,

**They say, “What, when we are bones and broken bits, shall we really be raised up again in a new creation?”
Say, “Let you be stones, or iron, or some creation yet more monstrous in your minds!” And [if] thereupon they ask, “Who will bring us back?” — then say, “He who originated you the first time.” They will shake their heads at you, and they will say, “When will it be?”
Say, “It is possible that it may be near, on the day when He will call you, and you will answer praising Him, and you will think you have but tarried a little” (17:49–52);**

**What, does man reckon We shall not gather his bones?
Yes indeed — We are able to shape again his fingers (75:3–4).**

Further, the Qur'an compares the resurrection to the revivification of the parched earth by rain,

Allah is He who sends out the winds, so that they raise a cloud, then We drive it to a dead land — and there-

with revive the earth, after it is dead. Even so is the uprising [resurrection] (35:9).

The rabbinic explanation of the apocalyptic reconstruction of the bodies of the dead from the “indestructible” bone at the bottom of the spine (*luz*, in Hebrew) was known to Muslim thinkers in the Middle Ages (Islamic doctrine does not specify how the body is resurrected). When Indian doctrines were encountered through the Persians, the *luz* was easily identified with the *piada* of Indian yoga and cosmology. This is the microcosmic reflection, within the person, of the macrocosmic *hiraayagarbha* (*world egg*), designated in Persian as *majma-i anasir hasti* (*the totality of elements of existence*), or what some may refer to in the Qur'an as *kullu amr* (*all decrees*).

The Christian doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus does not exist in Islam. It is understood that the crucifixion was a semblance only; that Jesus (ﷺ) did not die on the cross but instead passed into a temporarily inactive state; that he is in this state alive in the invisible and will return from it again in the Second Coming, which will mark the end of the cycle, or the end times.

In the Qur'anic and Islamic understanding of things, life is not just the short life span of an individual within a physical body for several decades on earth. Neither is life limited to the combined life spans of individuals who make up a particular people or race. Nor is life bounded by the thousands of millions of years that constitute the prolonged period of time belonging to the whole of corporeal humanity. Life in an Islamic mind and heart is before and after the “setting in of time.” Life extends beyond the skylines and horizons as man knows them. Life has a depth incomprehensible to the senses of man. Life is multifaceted, trans-rational, and dateless. Obviously, the material man, the secular subordinate, and the *mushriks* will try to define life and then generalize their definition of it as far as they possibly can, **“They say, ‘But it is only our earthly life [and no other life] and we shall not be revived.’”**

Life in the Islamic concept is timeless and endless. Time also extends beyond the domain of this world into the expanse of the coming one. Life has an abode as far and as near as man's perception

may take him (the heavens and earth). It also has a raging fire that has the capacity to consume millions and millions of people. Life goes beyond the range of human participation in it. There is life in places familiar to man, and likewise in places unfamiliar. Man shall have a life “in death” and he shall have a life in the eternal world that follows. The exact nature of eternal life cannot be conceptualized by man, however that there will be life is known to him.

Life, for a committed Muslim, has this never-ending and limitless quality. But for those who are earth-centered and God-oblivious, life is confined to the physical sphere of their senses where they develop peculiar types of phobias and phobic disorders. It is no wonder, then, that when there are two distinct sets of people — one acquiring its meanings of life, existence, and resurrection from a divine source, and another formulating or philosophizing its own self-centered definitions — then there is a divergence of values and principles, standards and objectives, ethics and laws.

And as it turns out, the God-denying *mushriks* will do anything to hang on to this worldly life and its leisure because that is all they have — in their perception of things. They are willing to commit crimes, launch aggressive wars, plunder the resources of the earth, change people’s minds about basic concepts, and confront Allah (ﷻ) and His authority because, to them, all of this is outdated, non-practical, and just so much nonsense. Therefore, it is a measure of Allah’s (ﷻ) grace that He gives man this extended view of life, which he shall live in both worlds with his consciousness and mind, even though the physical body is located currently and temporarily in this world.

This expansive perception of life with its depth and variety releases the human being from the phobic disorders and the morbid fear of being confined — that is, not being free — to a time and place beyond which there is no life. The standard is raised, the horizon is spread out, and life is no longer worldly, earthly, mortal, or mundane. The morality and mannerism coming out of this healthy understanding that acknowledges Allah’s (ﷻ) authority is much better than the human-devised concept of *determinism*, the doctrine that every event happens according to physical laws, is

causally determined, and is independent of human will. This solid perception of life beyond *empiricism*, the doctrine that knowledge can be gained only through sense perception and experience, is liberating. In this understanding of life and afterlife, man is not a creature of his desires as is the case with *epicureanism*, the classic Greek doctrine that good is pleasure and evil is pain.

Knowing what we know from Allah (ﷻ) and His irreplaceable Scripture, man need not suffer the consequences of believing in *existentialism*, the doctrine that human beings have complete free will but no given essence, and have to define themselves with absolute responsibility for their choices in a world that is without independent moral values. Allah (ﷻ), by giving man this definite information about life, responsibility, and resurrection, wants him to break away from the flaws of *fatalism*, the doctrine that everything is predestined, as by fate, and that human will and action are powerless to affect events. As if there is no end in sight, there are secular, laic, and irreverent philosophies such as *humanism*, which says that the basic principle of morality is human culture and the well-being of humanity is no longer acceptable when it is guided by the true concepts of life and death, morality and immorality, and legitimacy and illegitimacy, as presented by man's Maker and Sustainer.

Mental runaways from Allah (ﷻ) have produced philosophical absurdities such as *nihilism*, the doctrine that denies the existence of everything but upholds a political theory or movement based on the rejection of all authority or any curtailment of "individual freedom." Human individuals and societies that shut themselves off from Allah (ﷻ) and His accurate *āyāt* about life and death, moral versus utilitarian responsibility, and man's authority conflicting with Allah's (ﷻ) authority will, as history bears out, rationalize such philosophies as *hedonism*, the doctrine that pleasure is the basic principle or chief good in life, and underlies morality or determines one's actions. The world in its roving and roaming away from Allah (ﷻ) and the vital information He relates about life and death, responsibility and resurrection, and action and accountability would exclude doctrines such as *instrumentalism*, which says that the value of ideas lies not in their correctness but in their practical success.

How much longer do we have to suffer as human societies bereft of Allah (ﷻ) stumble from one flurry of doctrines and ideologies to the next, and in the process suffer unnecessary losses in family and social fraternity. In the last 100 years or so we human beings, in practically all countries of the world, have endured distress and suffered emotionally because of the “wave of materialism,” the doctrine that physical matter is the basic reality, that thoughts and emotions are simply results of it, and that religious and supernatural beliefs are baseless. Materialistic indoctrination has taught hundreds of millions of people that history and social and economic changes have mechanical material causes, and this “understanding” is peddled through systems established and managed by the age-old *mushriks*, a reminder of whom is given so often in the Qur’an.

The above doctrines, philosophies, and theories have dominated the human condition because Muslims rooted in the Qur’an are nowhere to be seen, leaving the arena wide open for what now amounts to a materialistic chaos. Clearly, over the past few centuries, the Muslims have been guilty of leaving this Qur’an, inevitably resulting in a civilizational vacuum that has been filled by such false schools of thought and doctrines. The Muslims’ failure began when they negotiated away the centrality of Allah’s (ﷻ) authority in human relations and organization; what followed assuredly was the loss of their power — a power they should have known comes from Allah, and Allah (ﷻ) alone.

Muslim absenteeism in this area gave rise to such ideas and ideologies as *positivism*, the doctrine that knowledge consists of or is derived from actual facts, and that mere feelings and religious or supernatural beliefs are not true knowledge. The lack of Muslim confidence in Allah (ﷻ), His Prophet (ﷺ), and His revered Revelation gave impetus to *prescriptivism*, the doctrine that statements about good and evil cannot be either true or untrue, but simply reflect and prescribe moral attitudes. It also gave way to *pragmatism*, which is sold to masses disenchanted with *idealism* as the practical approach to political or personal dealings, rejecting ideological and historical considerations. The Muslims’ ideological and authoritative nonexistence in the real world and in the shaping of man’s future

caused the intrusion of such notions as *rationalism*, the doctrine that knowledge can be gained only through reason, and the doctrine that religion is rejected because it is contrary to reason! What a world the Muslim failure to be present with its God-given information has permitted to take shape, giving rise to such ideas as *relativism*, which says that truth is not absolute but varies from individual to individual, culture to culture, and age to age.

The grossly inaccurate description of a final life of bliss being contingent on a worldly life of indifference toward tyranny and withdrawal from social self-determination on the basis of scripture has relegated the running of world affairs to despots and dictators. Unknowledgeable people who claim to be supportive of God's authority — that is, today's crop of Muslims — demonstrate their failure of resolve when they turn over the issue of authority to people who are ignorant of or antagonistic to God's authority. The dichotomy between current life and afterlife comes from the dichotomy between Caesar and God. There need not be a “render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's” when everything, including Caesar, belongs to God.

In the Islamic perception of world, life, and existence, the earth itself is the plantation and farm of the *ākhirah*. All efforts, endeavors, labor, and struggle to synchronize this world's social activities, programs, and objectives to the standards and principles of Allah's (ﷻ) justice, according to His authority and permanence, is a contribution to man's well-being in the life that follows.

How can Muslims abandon a *din* of this nature by becoming passive or secular? The more the Muslims vacate these responsibilities, the more permanently life will remain stale and stagnant, losing its quality and vitality. Oppression will run rampant and dictators will rule. And within this condition of deterioration and decay, there will still be “religious” people who are expecting a “good life” after death even as they were satisfied with a “bad life” before death.

A committed Qur'anic Muslim is above the materialistic attractions of the *dunyā*. He does indeed partake of its wholesome offerings without being beholden to them. He knows what is *ḥalāl*

and savors it on his way to a flourishing *ākhirah*. At the same time he struggles to improve the standards of life and in the process may have to stand up for and fight for justice. He knows this to be his duty as Allah's (ﷺ) *khalifah* on earth. A Muslim sees no contradiction in fighting against evil, corruption, and tyranny with all the sacrifices involved, even up to the moment of dying for the cause of Allah (ﷻ) and becoming a *shahid*. And in doing all this, he gears up and prepares for the rewards that follow in the life of permanence. He knows that all roads to the *ākhirah* pass through this world. He knows that this world cannot consume him or stand in his way as he moves toward Allah (ﷻ) and the life of bliss in His abode. For this purpose and with this understanding, an Islamic life does not grow stronger without the central concept of the *ākhirah*. And so, the Muslims are constantly prompted and reminded of the *ākhirah* as they talk the Qur'anic talk and walk the Qur'anic walk.

The Arabians in their age of ignorance (*jāhiliyah*) and in their socializing of that ignorance had no practical concern for and no conceptualization of an ensuing life as a logical consequence of this current crass life. "Earth is here, life is now, and that is it" pretty much encapsulates their limited point of view. The human self and individual life had nowhere to go, it came from nowhere and it was going nowhere. These "thoughts," if they can be characterized as such, were very crude and primitive — almost sub-human. But the Arabian *jāhiliyah* was no anomaly. The current age of ignorance with its scientific coating is much the same in this regard, **"And they [the deniers of Allah's authority and power] said, 'It is only our earthly life, and we will not be raised from the dead.'"**

The people who do not want to be bothered with the consequences of life are the ones who make this kind of statement. Those who omit justice and its eventuality from their vocabulary and behaviors are the ones who question last judgement — general, or sometimes individual — and the judging of the thoughts, words, and deeds of persons by Allah (ﷻ). The historical presence of such a concept, even though it has been roundly disfigured, attests to its depth and significance over the course of time. Anthropological information about ancient Egyptian religion, which may not be very

accurate, suggests that a dead person's heart was judged by the direction a balance held by Anubis (jackal-headed god of tombs) would tip. If the heart was light, thus indicating a person's comparative goodness, the soul was allowed to go to the blessed region ruled by Osiris (god of the underworld and judge of the dead); on the other hand, if the heart was heavy, the soul might be destroyed by a creature called the Devouress.

Zoroastrianism, similarly, teaches that after death the soul waits for three nights by the grave and on the fourth day goes to the Bridge of the Requiter, where its deeds are weighed. If the good deeds outweigh the bad, the soul is able to cross the bridge to Heaven; if the bad deeds outweigh the good, the bridge becomes too narrow for the soul to cross, and it plunges into the cold, dark abyss of Hell. This is not the end, however, for there will be a final overthrow of Ahriman, the prince of demons, by Ahura Mazda, the wise Lord, who will resurrect all men, preside over a Last Judgement, and restore the world to goodness.

Early Judaic writers emphasized a day of Yahweh, the God of Israel, which is also called the day of the Lord. This day, which will be a day of judgement of Israel and all nations, will inaugurate the Kingdom of God. Christianity, further explicating the concept of the Last Judgement, teaches that it will occur at the Parousia (the Second Coming, or Second Advent, of Christ in glory), when all men will stand before a judging God.

The world cannot live in peace if its people think, believe, and act as if this world is the beginning and the end, that there is no life after this earthly one, and that there is no consequence for whatever man has done while here in this world. The people of this world will never be relieved of conflicting competitions, a rush to possess everything, and a war over markets, resources, and labor if they consider this small planet or any of its accessible material planetary spheres to be the extent of time and place. Such trepidation can only give way to anxious conditions, alarmist assumptions, and panicky relations among nations and states. When a society ceases to actively think about an ultimate justice through ultimate accountability on an ultimate day, then the rulers of such a society

can get away with the mushrooming injustice that comes out of a swiftly executed authoritarianism.

An *ummaḥ* that is assigned by Allah (ﷻ) to rid humanity of persecution, dominance through threat of punishment and violence, and one-man-rule has to think, plan, and act knowing that there is a Day of Judgement and a Day of Justice. In the process this world will no longer be the cattle pen, the coop, and the cage that it has become. Changing this world and life, and repositioning them where they belong in man's heart and mind will require a massive redirection of conviction, and the *āyāt* here drive the point home,

If you could but see [them — the opponents of Allah's authority and ability] when they shall be made to stand before their Sustainer [and] He will say, "Is not this the truth [pertaining to power and authority]?" They will answer, "Yes, certainly, [we swear] by our Sustainer." [Upon which] He will say, "Taste, then, the suffering that comes from your having refused [in earthly life] to acknowledge the truth [about Allah's authority and office]" (6:30).

This is how the journey will end for those who in accountable life were bragging and advertising through all the channels available to them that there is no ultimate life, that **"...there is nothing beyond our life in this world, for we shall not be raised from the dead."** Looking at them through the crystalline lens of the Qur'an, they appear pathetic, invoking pity from onlookers. As they stand in the presence of their Sustainer, whom they always questioned, doubted, denied, and rejected, they will be frantic with tension but nonetheless unable to escape. The Qur'anic words are revealing, **"He [Allah] says, 'Is this not [now] the accuracy and legitimacy [*ḥaqq*]?"**" The question itself deflates and dishonors; and no response other than the truth will suffice, **"They replied, 'Yes, certainly [it is, we assert] by our Sustainer.'"** Such people spend a whole lifetime(s) with all the resources available to them trying to disprove and rebut the very position they find themselves in at this

moment. On this occasion, the decision is Allah's (ﷻ) and it comes sweepingly and conclusively, **“He [Allah] answered, ‘Then try out the torment that is warranted by your [lifetime] denial [of My power and authority].’”**

Readers of the Qur'an need to understand that this is not a trivial issue. This painful outcome is what lifelong *mushriks* are looking forward to, though they choose to be oblivious of it in this world. Allah (ﷻ) gives them the chance at an unlimited life in an unending existence under His enlightened authority and yet they opt for a limited life in a throttled existence under the foolish authority of despots and tyrants. How obtuse and dense men can be.

The concluding segment of this lesson corresponds to the significance and implication of this scene,

Indeed, at a loss are those who [try to] refute the [eventual] encounter with Allah — until the Last Hour abruptly comes upon them, [and] they cry, “Alas for us, that we disregarded it!” (6:31).

Their worldly vocabulary was overloaded with the word *loss* and its equivalents. Their eyes were fixated on loss of profit, damage to property, and a disadvantage to their programs. They spoke about loss of value, as of a car; about depreciation, as in loss through age and wear and tear; about making amends for a loss or injury, as by a payment or compensation; about making good one's losses, as in recouping them; and about a “loss,” or death, of a loved one.

And so, in their own language, Allah (ﷻ) speaks about the quintessential loss. Those who are not certain of meeting Allah (ﷻ) are at a loss. This time, the loss is permanent. They failed to acquire eternal life because they failed to keep Allah's (ﷻ) company. They may have gained something trivial here in this world, but in the following one they lose everlasting bliss. There are even surprises in store for them, **“...until the Last Hour suddenly comes upon them, [and] they cry, ‘Alas for us, that we disregarded it [the Last Hour].’”** On that Day, they will move about like beasts of burden, much like they forced the people they

oppressed on this earth to behave, **“And they are packing their sins upon their backs.”** Beasts in fact are better off because they only carry material and will eventually be relieved of their cargo once they reach a destination; but these *mushriks* will be loaded down with contemptibility and iniquity, and they will go with that cargo of sin to al-Jahīm (Hell), **“How evil the freight with which they shall be burdened!”** This discloses a true loss, without recovery and without relief.

Zuhd Is Not Meant to Encourage Quietism toward Tyranny

The last part of this lesson draws attention to the contrast between the worthiness of this world and that of the end-world,

And nothing is the life of this world but a toying and an entertainment; and the life in the hereafter is by far the better for all who are conscious [of Allah’s power presence]. Will you not, then, [think and] reason? (6:32).

This world is literally a drop in the ocean when compared to eternity and infinity. On looking back from the vantage point of the Last Day, the doorway into the everlasting life, all the activities and movements on earth would seem to be little more than dabbling, splashing around, and light entertainment.

Life has its divinely defined responsibilities, and they cannot be shirked because some limited and imprecise secular systems choose to turn a blind eye to them. Similarly, these paramount and fundamental responsibilities — foremost among which is to stand for, and if need be, to die for, the authority of Allah (ﷻ) — cannot be deserted because of a spurious understanding of *zuhd* (withdrawal from the world; asceticism) or a false interpretation of Sufism. In principle, these concepts and practices are valuable and to be held in high esteem by all Muslims — but only when they are not fraudulently practiced or absorbed in the wrong way.

Before getting into some specifics related to the latter (*zuhd* and Sufism), it would be appropriate at this point to provide some

guiding context about the general domain of what is often referred to as *mysticism*, a spiritual quest for hidden truth or wisdom, the goal of which is union with the divine or sacred (the transcendent realm). Forms of mysticism are to be found in all the major world religions, by analogy in the shamanic (acting as a medium between the physical and the spiritual) and other ecstatic practices of non-literate cultures, and in secular experience.

Mysticism seeks a “coupling” with the divine or sacred at a level that recognizes, **“Fa-nafakhnā fihī min rūhinā: And We blew into him [the human] of Our rūh” (66:12)**. The path to what some people call a union is usually developed by following four stages: purgation (of bodily desires), purification (of the will), illumination (of the mind), and unification (of one’s will or being with the divine). If “the object of man’s existence is to be a man, that is, to reestablish the harmony that originally belonged between him and the divinic state before the separation took place, which disturbed the equilibrium,” mysticism will always be a part of the way of return to the source of being, a way of counteracting the experience of alienation. To this end, there ought to be no conflict between ridding the personal self of its earthly lusts and desires and ridding society of its deviations and injustice.²⁵⁵

Mysticism’s apparent denial, or self-negation, is part of a psychological process or strategy that does not really deny the person. Indeed, many forms of mysticism satisfy the claims of rationality, ecstasy, and righteousness. There is obviously something non-mental, paradoxical, and unpredictable about the mystical phenomenon, but it is not, therefore, irrational or anti-rational or “religion without thought.” Rather, as Zen Buddhist masters say, it is knowledge of the most adequate kind, only it cannot be expressed in words. If there is a mystery about mystical experience, it is something shared with life and consciousness. Mysticism, a form of living in depth, indicates that in humans there is a meeting ground of various levels of reality; man is more than one-dimensional. Despite the interaction and correspondence between levels — for instance, “what is below is like what is above; what is above is like what is below” — they are not to be equated or confused. At once

a praxis (technique) and a gnosis (esoteric knowledge), mysticism consists of a way or discipline.²⁵⁶

In the minds of some mystics, the relationship of the religion of faith to mysticism (“personal religion raised to the highest power”) is ambiguous, a mixture of respect and misgivings. Though mysticism may be associated with religion, it need not be as they contend. The mystic often represents a type that the structured and hierarchical religious institution (that is, the established church) does not and cannot produce and does not know what to do with if and when one appears. Some might say that institutionalism and mysticism have been uneasy bedfellows. Although mysticism has been the core of Hinduism and Buddhism, it has been little more than a minor element — and frequently a disturbing one — in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. As the 15th- and 16th-century Italian political philosopher Machiavelli had noted of the 13th-century Christian monastic leaders St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic, they had saved the religion but destroyed the church.²⁵⁷

Paradigmatic (pertaining to a paradigm) pronouncements in regard to mysticism pose problems of their own. The classical Indian formula — “*tat tvam asi*: that thou art” — is hedged around the profoundest ambiguity. The difficulty reappears in the thought of some medieval Christian mystics who provoked the Church into raising questions over such unguarded statements as, “The knower and the known are one; God and I, and we are one in knowledge,” and “There is no distinction between us.”²⁵⁸

Mysticism may be defined as a belief in a third kind of knowledge, the other two being sense knowledge and knowledge by inference. This same view was held by some philosophers dating back to ancient Greece. But the pattern misses the other dominant quality of mystical experience — love or union through love. The medieval, theistic view of mysticism (as of religious life) was that it was “a stretching out of the soul into God through the urge of love, an experimental knowledge of God through unifying love.”²⁵⁹

Certain forms of mysticism, however, would seem to strive toward a naked encounter with the Whole or All, without and beyond symbols. Of this kind of direct apprehension of the

absolute, introvertive mysticism offers examples from different times and traditions. Instead of looking out, the gaze turns inward, toward the unchanging, the undifferentiated “One without a second.” The process by which this state is attained is by a blotting out or suppression of all physical sensations — indeed, of the entire empirical content of consciousness. Early Indian mystics called it “the holding or stopping of the mind stuff.”²⁶⁰

Such undifferentiated unity of union between the individual and the supreme self is unacceptable to certain traditions and temperaments. The Jewish philosopher Martin Buber emphasized an “I-Thou” relationship — “All real living is meeting,” and one Thou cannot become It. But even his own “unforgettable experience” of union he would explain as “illusory.”²⁶¹ With a wider range, others have tried to establish different kinds, or types, of mysticism: the isolationist, the separation of spirit and matter, eternity from time; the pantheistic, or *pan-enhenic*, in which the soul is the universe — all creaturely existence is one; the theistic, in which the soul feels identified with God; and the beatific, with its hope of deification when “the perishable puts on the unperishable.”²⁶²

Mystical experience, which is centered in a seeking for unity, admits of wide variations but falls into recognizable types: mild and extreme, extrovertive and introvertive, and theistic and non-theistic. Another well-known topology — corresponding to the faculties of thinking, willing, and feeling — employs the Indian formula, the respective ways of knowledge (*jnana*), works (*karma*), and devotion (*bhakti*). Claims have been made on behalf of each, though many mystics have tried to accord to each its place and also to arrive at a synthesis, as in the Bhagavad Gita.²⁶³ Depending on the powers of discrimination, the intellectual or the contemplative type tries to reach the Highest, the One, or the “Godhead behind God.” In its approach toward the supreme identity it tends to be chary (watchful) of multiplicity, “to deny the world that it may find reality.” Some mystics were ashamed to be in the body. In the 17th century, Spinoza’s non-denominational concept of intellectual love of God revealed a sense of aloofness or isolation reminiscent of the ancient Hindus.²⁶⁴

Another type of mysticism is that defined by love and devotion. A theistic attitude, or devotional mysticism, depends upon mutual attraction. In the words of a Sufi poet, "I sought Him for thirty years, I thought that it was I who desired Him, but no, it was He who desired me." The path of devotion includes the rituals of prayer, worship, and adoration, which — if done with sincerity, inwardness, and understanding — can bring some of the most rewarding treasures of the religious life, including ecstasy. There is a paradox and a danger here: the paradox of avoiding loss of personality, the danger of self-indulgence.²⁶⁵

Also, in an unpurified medium, the experiences may and do give rise to erotic feelings, a fact observed and duly warned against by the Christian Church fathers and leaders of other faiths as well (Zen Buddhism, for instance, avoids both the overly personal and erotic suggestions). Sometimes the distinction between *eros* (Greek for *erotic love*) or *kama* (Sanskrit for *sexual love*) and *agape* (Greek for *a higher love*) or *prema* (Sanskrit for *higher love*) can be thin. In the Indian tradition the Vaisnava and Tantric experiments were, in their apparently different ways, bold and honest attempts at sublimation, though some of these experiments were failures.²⁶⁶

The same fate is likely to overtake the use of pharmacological aids to visionary experience — practices that are by no means new and occur in traditions as disparate as Zoroastrianism and native American religions. A yogic writer, Patanjali, speaks of the use of *ausadhi* (a medicinal herb) as a means to yogic experience, and the vedas and tantras refer to wine as part of worship and the initiatory rites. The Greek Mysteries (religions of salvation) sometimes used sedatives and stimulants. Primarily meant to remove ethical, social, and mental inhibitions and to open up the subconscious no less than the subliminal, these techniques, as a rule, were frowned upon, even though those who took the help of such artificial aids had undergone prior training and discipline.²⁶⁷

All of the major religious traditions have some form of mystical thought and practice. For some traditions mysticism forms a core piece of the religion, whereas, in the major Western monotheistic traditions, mystic thought and practice has tended to

be at the periphery of those traditions. Hinduism is often predisposed to mystical interpretation. As the highest ideal of Hindu religious practice, ascetic *moksha* (release) has received the most attention. At least in part, yoga represents the rise within traditional Hinduism of a special mystical technique that was intended to make possible for the select few a high degree of mystical insight originally predicated of the many. The techniques of yoga, including the physical discipline of *hatha*, were combined with traditional Hindu doctrines about the absorption of the individual soul in the All. Other forms of Hindu mysticism are more personal, relating the devotee to a particular deity of the Hindu pantheon, while still others stress the passivity of faith as trust and surrender to the grace and power of Krishna or Rama.²⁶⁸

Common to the various traditions of Buddhism is an emphasis upon meditation and contemplation as a means of moving toward *nirvana*, but each of the Buddhist traditions sets its own distinctive interpretation of that goal. Of special interest in any discussion of Buddhist mysticism are Vajrayana and Zen. Practitioners of Vajrayana, or Tantric Buddhism, in Tibet combine yogic discipline with an absolutistic philosophy and highly symbolic language to cultivate mystical ecstasy.²⁶⁹

The foundations for Jewish mysticism were laid in the visions of the biblical prophets and the apocalyptic imagery of post-biblical Judaism. The most characteristic and profound theme of mystical Judaism is the Kabbalah, which reached its climax in the *Sepher ha-Zohar* (*Book of Splendor*) near the end of the 13th century. This book described the power and inner life of God, setting forth the principles and commandments by means of which the true believer could regain the *devequt* (adherence to God) that had been destroyed by man's fall from pristine purity. Subsequent Jewish mysticism continued to build upon the *Sepher ha-Zohar*. The Hasidic form in particular had far-reaching effects upon the piety and practice of the common people; and in the thought of Martin Buber, Jewish mysticism shaped both Christian and secular thought as well.²⁷⁰

The mystical aspects of Christianity have been manifested most clearly in a recurring pattern and movements. In the religion

of St. Paul and St. John, “Christ-mysticism,” frequently spontaneous and unsought, is fundamental. The Desert Fathers of the 3rd and 4th centuries established an eremitic (hermetic and cloistered) tradition of conscious preparation and practice for mystical enlightenment. St. Augustine’s account of the divine light of being drew upon Neoplatonic themes and imagery that would figure strongly in the literature of subsequent mystics, who emphasized the reality of the ideal world in which all things are eternally present as elements in the being of God. Mysticism flourished in the 14th century both within the Church and in numerous heresies, a dichotomy that was to characterize several later periods. In general, Protestant mystics explicitly recognize that which is implied in Roman Catholic teaching: that the divine light or spark is a universal principle.²⁷¹

Sufism, a mystical discipline in Islam — or to others a *ṭarīqah* (means) — often expresses itself in the metaphors of intoxication and of the love between bride and bridegroom, the kind of language that is not easy to reconcile with the emphasis of the Qur’an upon the sovereignty and transcendence of Allah (ﷻ). At the same time, mysticism made the reality of the divine accessible to those who found the concept of divinity in the Qur’an austere and distant.

In this broad spectrum of mystic developments there appears to be a motivated and obvious disregard for the organized and militant encounter with governmental tyrannies and authoritarian regimes. This is not to say that all mystics and sufis fit into this characterization. Obviously, in the Islamic history of the past two centuries, there have been those who are generally classified as mystics or sufis — Ḥasan al-Bannā (Egypt), ‘Umar Mukhtār (Libya), and Imam Khomeini (Iran), to name a few — but who were not absorbed into mysticism in a way that annulled the action and movement elements of scripture in society.

Mysticism, which is infused with asceticism (*zuhd*) as a central component, need not, nor should it, displace the potential for human justice into a personal quest for individual perfection. The renunciation of ease and comfort in the name of religious discipline in order to detach the soul from the world is not an Islamically or

Qur'anically comfortable definition. In the Islamic Arabic terminology, an ascetic is called a *zāhid*. This is, above all, a mystical attitude that finds its example in the Prophet (ﷺ) himself, who practiced frequent fasts and long hours of devotion in *ṣalāh* in the middle of the night. But it is not an indispensable aspect of mysticism, at least insofar as hardship is concerned. The widespread school of Imam al-Shādhilī, for example, prescribed a detachment that is inward rather than outward, without of course admitting indulgence, or love of creature comfort, but also without pursuing mortification as an end in and of itself.²⁷²

This noble discipline of *taṣawwuf* (Sufism) needs to undergo a serious filtration process to the end of putting the Sufi back in the context of the Qur'an and in the spirit of Scripture that do not tolerate a Sufi at one end who is withdrawn from the issues of social justice and a politician on the other end who is exercising all-out injustice while both of them belong to the same society, and maybe even to the same ruling party or Sufi order. This is what exists today in our inordinate Sufis and our outrageous politicians, both of whom claim to be devout Muslims. In the proper context of things, a humble Muslim is in charge of self without abandoning society or at the expense of social justice; and correspondingly, a Muslim in a position of power is in charge of society without indulging himself. There has to come a time when aspects of asceticism and power are equally "in check" within the social self of an individual and the selfless society of the Ummah.

And nothing is the life of this world but a play and a flirting delectation (pleasure); and the life in the end-world is by far the better for all who are conscious and averting [of Allah's dominant power]. Will you not, then, reckon and reason? (6:32).

All this massive worldwide confusion about the unknown is a symptom of abandoning Allah (ﷻ). If human senses cannot detect that which is beyond their time range, or if they cannot feel matters beyond their touch, or if they do not have the instruments or tech-

nology to go the distances the Qur'an speaks of, then this is no reason for them to give up on God. Today's dominant materialism and secularism has been covering things up with the veneer of science, but even that is catching up with its proponents. Even with the high hopes over scientific breakthroughs and technological innovations, the mind and heart still long for Allah's (ﷻ) authority. Science itself has reached the threshold of having to admit that there are things man knows and things he does not. When will man return to Allah (ﷻ)? When will humanity realize it has limitations? When will otherwise smart people stop experimenting with social theories and "wide of the mark," man-made ideologies? This Qur'an offers the answer — the full answer, without flaws and with all the confidence that comes from Allah (ﷻ). The people of this misguided and disintegrating world are advised to wake up to the *haqq* (truth), to read and understand it before they expire and find themselves unable to correct the wrongs that all humanity is collectively responsible for.

Endnotes

- 1 **Soren Kierkegaard** (1813–1855) – Danish philosopher and theologian whose assessment of the human predicament makes him one of the sources of existentialism. Opposed to the system building of Hegel, Kierkegaard was impressed by the isolated and subjective life of the individual, and by the unbridgeable gap between sinful man and God. Kierkegaard saw the individual, filled with dread and overawed by the fact of being, taking refuge in a "leap of faith" toward Christianity. See also **Endnote 115** in Volume 3 and **Endnote 147** in Volume 9.



Albert Camus (1913–1960) – Algerian-born French writer and philosopher. A journalist in France, he was active in the French resistance during WWII. His novels, which owe much to existentialism, include *L'Étranger* (*The Outsider*, 1942), *La Peste* (*The Plague*, 1948), and *L'Homme révolte* (*The Rebel*, 1952). He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature (1957). See also **Endnote 45** in Volume 2.



Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) – French author and philosopher; a leading proponent of existentialism. He published his first novel, *La Nausee* (*Nausea*, 1937) followed by the trilogy *Les Chemins de la Liberte* (*Roads to Freedom*, 1944–1945) and many plays, including *Huis Clos* (*In Camera*, 1944). *L’Etre et le neant* (*Being and Nothingness*, 1943), his first major philosophical work, sets out a radical doctrine of human freedom. In the later work *Critique de la raison dialectique* (*Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 1960), he tried to produce a fusion of existentialism and Marxism.



Sartre, born in Paris, was the longtime companion of the feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir. During WWII he was a prisoner for nine months, and on his return from Germany joined the French resistance. As a founder of existentialism, he edited its journal, *Les Temps modernes* (*Modern Times*), and expressed its tenets in his novels and plays. According to Sartre, people’s awareness of their own freedom takes the form of anxiety, and they therefore attempt to flee from this awareness into what he terms *mauvaise foi* (bad faith); this is the theory he put forward in *L’Etre et le neant* (*Being and Nothingness*). In *Crime passionnel* (*Crime of Passion*, 1948), he attacked aspects of communism while remaining generally sympathetic. In his later works, Sartre became more sensitive to the social constraints on people’s actions. He refused the 1964 Nobel Prize for Literature for “personal reasons,” but allegedly changed his mind later, saying he wanted it for the money. See also **Endnote 45** in Volume 2 and **Endnote 65** in Volume 3.

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) – philosopher, born in Messkirch, Germany. He was a professor at Freiburg (1929–1945), where he was appointed rector in 1933, but was retired after declaring support for Hitler in his inaugural address. He succeeded Husserl as a leading figure in the phenomenological movement, and though he disclaimed the label of “existentialist,” he was a key influence on Sartre through his writings on the nature and predicament of human existence, the search for “authenticity,” and the distractions of *Angst* (dread). His major work is the highly original but very obscure *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*, 1927).



- 2 **Rene Descartes** (1596–1650) – French philosopher, mathematician, and scientist, often called the father of modern philosophy. Born into lesser nobility near Tours, at age eight he entered the Jesuits’ La Fleche school in Anjou and later pursued law at Poitiers and higher studies at Paris. Descartes served in the army of Prince Maurice of Orange, and in 1619, while traveling through Europe, decided to apply the methods of mathematics to metaphysics and sci-

ence. In 1628, he settled in the Netherlands, where he was more likely to be free from interference by the ecclesiastical authorities, and soon achieved recognition for his mathematical prowess. His view that all knowledge must have the certainty of mathematics and all less certain concepts must be strenuously doubted threatened accepted views of church and state. In 1649, he visited the court of Queen Christina of Sweden, and shortly thereafter died in Stockholm. His works include *Discourse on Method* (1637), *Meditations on the First Philosophy* (1641), *Principles of Philosophy* (1644), and numerous books on physiology, optics, and geometry.



He believed that commonly accepted knowledge was doubtful because of the subjective nature of the senses, and attempted to rebuild human knowledge using as his foundation *cogito ergo sum* (*I think, therefore I am*). He could doubt everything, except the fact of his own thinking. From this he deduced his existence, and the existence of God and the physical universe as clearly necessary to a coherent whole. Descartes actually used variations of St. Anselm's and St. Aquinas' arguments for God's existence. God exists and is the cause of our idea of God. Mind and matter have their origin and unity in God. God gave matter its extension and motion. Descartes developed these ideas as clear and distinct truths. He depicted a mechanistic universe, started by God. The human mind, akin to God's, can then discover the laws that govern all substances by logically searching out everything step by step. The deepest mysteries of the universe can thus be unlocked. Humans live in an intelligible, mechanistic universe — and God stands outside. This approach led to his belief that the entire material universe could be explained in terms of mathematical physics, and founded coordinate geometry as a way of defining and manipulating geometrical shapes by means of algebraic expressions. Cartesian coordinates, the means by which points are represented in this system, are named after him. Descartes also established the science of optics, and helped to shape contemporary theories of astronomy and animal behavior.


Descartes identified the *res cogitans* (*mental substance*) — the mind with the human soul or consciousness; the body, though somehow interacting with the soul, was a physical machine, secondary to, and in principle separable from, the soul. He held that everything has a cause; nothing can result from nothing. He believed that, although all matter is in motion, matter does not move of its own accord; the initial impulse comes from God. He also postulated two quite distinct substances — spatial substance, or matter, and thinking substance, or mind. This is called “Cartesian dualism,” and it preserved him from serious controversy with the Church.

Descartes' philosophical method challenged scholasticism's methodology. His own self-consciousness — *cogito ergo sum* — heralded the primacy of

consciousness and subjectivity in later philosophy. Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant all felt his influence. See also **Endnote 608** in Volume 8 and **Endnote 326** in Volume 10.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) – philosopher and mathematician, born in Leipzig, Germany. He studied in Leipzig and Altdorf, and in 1667, joined the court of the Elector of Mainz, where he acted variously as courtier, civil servant, international lawyer, and diplomat, while mastering the science, mathematics, and philosophy of the day. He was sent on missions to Paris (1672) and London (1673), where it was disputed whether he or Isaac Newton was the inventor of infinitesimal calculus. In 1676, he became librarian to the Duke of Brunswick at Hanover, but was unpopular with George of Hanover and was left behind when the court moved to London in 1714. He died in Hanover two years later, with most of his work unrecognized and unpublished. He made original contributions to optics, mechanics, statistics, logic, and probability theory; conceived the idea of calculating machines and of a universal language; wrote on history, law, and political theory; and his philosophy was the foundation of 18th-century rationalism. Probably his greatest influence (for example, on Bertrand Russell) was as a mathematician and a pioneer of modern symbolic logic. See also **Endnote 608** in Volume 8.



- 3 **Christian von Wolff** (1679–1754) – German philosopher, mathematician, and scientist, born in Breslau, Silesia. He wrote numerous works in theology, psychology, botany, and physics but is best known as a leading spokesman of German rationalism. His series of essays, all beginning under the title *Rational Ideas*, covered many subjects and expounded Leibniz's theories in popular form. His corpus includes over 26 titles, with contributions primarily in the areas of mathematics and philosophy. He is often regarded as the central historical figure who links the philosophical systems of Leibniz and Kant. He was the first philosopher recognized to furnish Germans with a complete system of philosophy in their own language.
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- 4 **Voltaire** (1694–1778) – pseudonym of Francois Marie Arouet; the embodiment of the 18th-century European Enlightenment, he was a writer who was born in Paris. Educated by the Jesuits in Paris, he studied law, then turned to writing. For lampooning the Duc d'Orleans he was imprisoned in the Bastille (1717–1718), where he rewrote his tragedy *Oedipe*. This brought him fame, but he gained enemies at court, and was forced into exile in Eng-

land (1726–1729). Back in France, he wrote plays, poetry, historical and scientific treatises, and his *Lettres Philosophiques* (*Philosophical Letters*, 1734). He regained favor at court, becoming royal historiographer, then moved to Berlin at the invitation of Frederick the Great (1750–1753). In 1755, he settled near Geneva, where he wrote the satirical short story, *Candide* (1759). From 1762, he produced a range of anti-religious writings and the *Dictionnaire philosophique* (*Philosophical Dictionary*, 1764). In 1778, he returned as a celebrity to Paris, but died soon after his arrival.



- 5 **Claude-Adrien Helvetius** (1715–1771) – philosopher, born in Paris. As chamberlain to the queen’s household, he associated with the French philosophers of the day, such as Diderot and d’Alembert, with whom he was later to collaborate on the *Encyclopedie*. His controversial work *De l’esprit* (*On the Mind*, 1758), advancing the view that sensation is the source of all intellectual activity and that self-interest is the catalytic force of all human action, was condemned by the parliament of Paris to be publicly burned, but was thereafter widely read, and together with his posthumous *De l’homme* (*On Man*, 1772) greatly influenced Bentham and the British utilitarians.



Thomas Paine (1737–1809) – radical political writer, born in Thetford, Norfolk. In 1774, he sailed to Philadelphia, where his pamphlet *Common Sense* (1776) argued for complete independence. He served with the American army, and was made secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs. In 1787, he returned to England, where he wrote *The Rights of Man* (1791–1792), in support of the French Revolution. Arraigned for treason, he fled to Paris, where he was elected a deputy to the National Convention, but imprisoned for his proposal to offer the king asylum in the USA. At this time he wrote *The Age of Reason*, in favor of deism. Released in 1796, he returned to the United States in 1802, and died in New York City.



Paul-Henri Thiry (Baron) d’Holbach (1723–1789) – philosopher, translator, and prominent social figure of the French Enlightenment. In his philosophical writings Holbach developed a deterministic and materialistic metaphysics that grounded his polemics against organized religion and his utilitarian ethical and political theory. As a translator, Holbach made significant contributions to the European Enlightenment in science and religion. He translated German works on chemistry and geology into French, summarizing

many of the German advances in these areas in his entries in Diderot's *Encyclopedie*. Holbach also translated important English works on religion and political philosophy into French.

Holbach remains best known, however, for his role in Parisian society. The close circle of intellectuals that Holbach hosted and, in various ways, sponsored produced the *Encyclopedie* and a number of revisionary religious, ethical, and political works that contributed to the ideological basis for the French Revolution. Despite the radical views of many members of his coterie, however, Holbach's broader visiting guest list included many of the most prominent intellectual and political figures in Europe. His salon, then, was at once a shelter for radical thought and a hub of mainstream culture (source: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/holbach/>).



Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768) – German philosopher and writer of the European Enlightenment who is remembered for his Deism, the doctrine that human reason can arrive at a knowledge of God and ethics from a study of nature and humanity's own internal reality, so that one does not need religions based on revelation. Reimarus denied all miracles and mysteries except the creation itself. He held that the essential truths of natural religion were the existence of a wise and good Creator and the immortality of the soul, truths that were discoverable by reason and could constitute the basis of a universal religion. He believed that a revealed religion could never become universal, because it could never be intelligible and credible to all men. Even supposing that a revealed religion could be universally intelligible and credible, the Bible did not present such a revelation. It abounded in factual errors; contradicted human experience, as reason and morals; and was a fabric woven of folly, deceit, enthusiasm, selfishness and crime. Moreover, the Bible was not a doctrinal compendium, or catechism, which a true revelation would have to be.



Reimarus is best known for his *Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes* (*Apologia or Defense for the Rational Reverers of God*, 1750), an analysis of the life of the historical Jesus (ﷺ) that he circulated only among his close friends and left unpublished until after his death. Some writers, including Albert Schweitzer, credit Reimarus with initiating the scholarly investigation of the historical Jesus (source: http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Hermann_Samuel_Reimarus).

- 6 **al-Hijāz** – literally, *the barrier*; a region on the Red Sea coast of Arabia from the south of Makkah northward beyond Yanbu‘, and inland as far as

Madinah. Its main cities include Makkah, Madinah, Jiddah, al-Tā'if, and Yanbu'. Although the Ḥijāz was the cradle of Islam, after the founding of the Islamic State, the political center shifted from Madinah to Damascus, then to Baghdad, and from then on, the Ḥijāz became a cultural backwater. The region came under the administration of the Sharifian families. In WWI, the sons of the Sharīf of Makkah were prominent in raising the Arabian revolt against the Ottoman Turks. When the war ended, Sharīf Ḥusayn of Makkah declared himself king of the Ḥijāz. In 1924, however, the Ḥijāz was conquered by King 'Abd al-'Aziz of Banū Sa'ūd from the Najd. He took the title "King of the Najd and the Ḥijāz." As more regions were added by creeping annexation, the new, contiguous kingdom came to be known as Saudi Arabia. Because of the pilgrimage to Makkah, Jiddah, and with it the Ḥijāz, have remained the hub of commerce in Arabia.

Until recently, the Ḥijāz had a typical style of architecture. The houses had projecting wooden balconies called *rawshan*, where one could sleep at night, or sit and enjoy the evening breeze. In the north, wind towers on the roofs would catch and circulate breezes through the house. The style is also found on the island of Suakin, in the Red Sea, formerly a territory belonging to the Ḥijāz. Ḥijāzī architecture is said to be in part the result of influences introduced by Malayan craftsmen, which testifies to the cosmopolitan



nature of the region thanks to the presence of the holy cities that have drawn pilgrims and trade throughout the centuries. Today, unfortunately, the examples of this splendid architecture have largely disappeared, to be replaced by modern concrete buildings. See also Endnote 363 in Volume 7.

Najd – literally, *the highlands*; central plain of Arabia where Riyāḍ, the capital of Saudi Arabia, is located. See also **Endnote 235** in Volume 5.

- 7 **Leviathan** (1651) – also known by the longer title, *The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, it is a book written by English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). Its name derives from the biblical Leviathan, and it concerns the structure of society and legitimate government; it is regarded as one of the earliest and most influential examples of social contract theory. Written during the English Civil War (1642–1651), *Leviathan* argues for a social contract and rule by an absolute sovereign.

“Big Brother” – a fictional character and symbol in George Orwell’s novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (written in 1949). He is ostensibly the leader (most likely a symbolic figurehead) of Oceania, a totalitarian state wherein the ruling Party wields total power “for its own sake” over the inhabitants. In the society that Orwell describes, every citizen is under constant surveillance by the authorities, mainly by telescreens. The people are constantly reminded of this by the slogan “Big Brother is watching you,” a maxim that is ubiquitously on display. In modern culture the term “Big Brother” has entered the lexicon as a synonym for abuse of government power, particularly with regard to civil liberties, often specifically related to mass surveillance.

- 8 Narrated by Umm al-Mu‘minīn ‘Ā’ishah, and recorded by al-Bukhārī in the chapter on *nikāḥ*.
- 9 Narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās and recorded in hadith collections of Abū ‘Ubayd and al-Ṭabarānī.
- 10 Narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar and recorded by Abū Na‘īm and al-Haythamī in their hadith collections.

نزلت عليّ سورة الأنعام جملة واحدة يُسَبِّحُهَا سَبْعُونَ أَلْفًا مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ لَهُمْ رَجَلٌ بِالتَّسْبِيحِ وَالتَّحْمِيدِ.

- 11 Willam H. Gertz (editor), *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion*. (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: The Abingdon Press, 1986), p. 231.

- 12 Ibid.

Yahwist (source of the Pentateuch) – refer to **Endnote 115** in Volume 4.

13 Ibid.

Priestly (source of the Pentateuch) – refer to **Endnote 115** in Volume 4.

14 Ibid.

Wisdom Books (of the Bible) – a term used in biblical studies to refer to a subset of the books of the Hebrew Bible in the Septuagint version. There are seven of these books, namely the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Book of Wisdom, the Song of Songs (Song of Solomon), and Sirach.

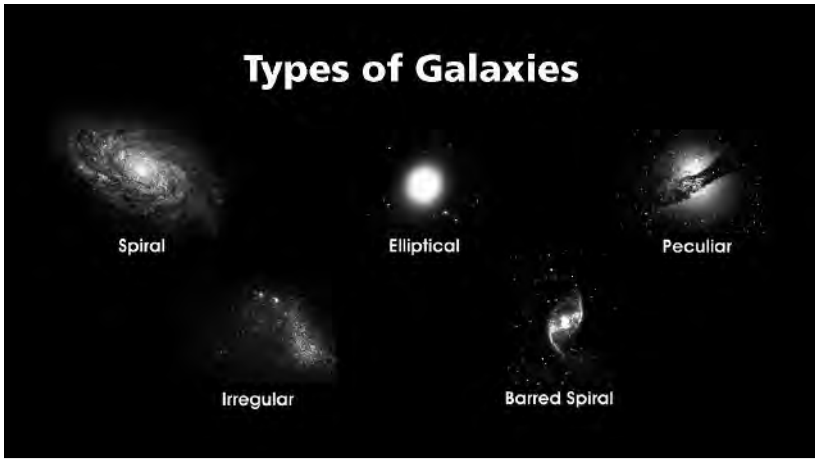
Prophetic Books (of the Bible) – these are divided between the Major and Minor Prophets; the terms *major* and *minor* are meant to describe their length and the importance of their message. The Major Prophetic Books include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel, though there is a difference of opinion about the Book of Daniel. The Minor Prophetic Books are comprised of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

15 Willam H. Gentz, *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion*, p. 231.

16 **Big Bang theory** – hypothetical model of the universe postulating that all matter and energy were once concentrated into an unimaginably dense state, or primeval atom, from which it has been expanding since a creation event some 10–13 billion years ago. The main evidence favoring this model comes from cosmic background radiation and the red shifts of galaxies. Evidence for an expanding universe was announced by Edwin Hubble in 1929, and is now generally accepted. See also **Endnote 3** in Volume 6.

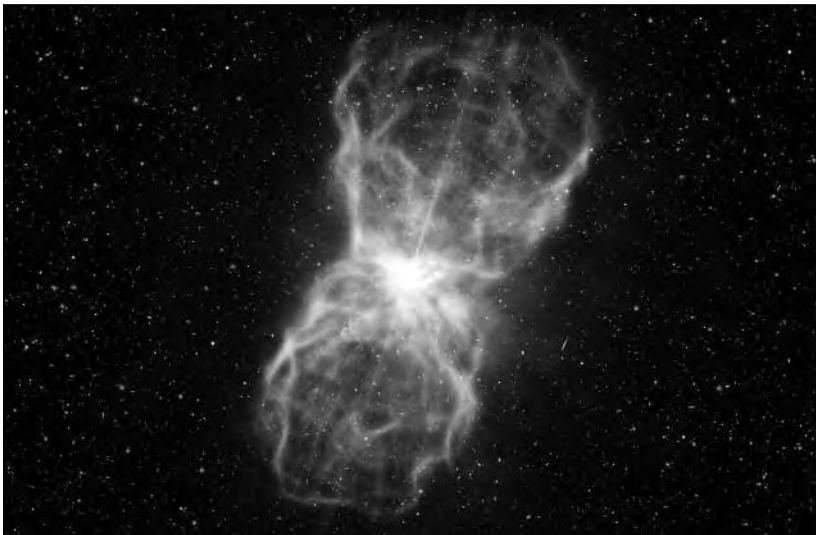
Steady State theory – an alternative to the Big Bang model of the evolution of the universe, it proposes that the density of matter in the expanding universe remains unchanged due to a continuous creation of matter, thus adhering to the *perfect cosmological principle*, a principle asserting that the observable universe is basically the same at any time as well as at any place. The theory is credited to the work of Hermann Bondi, Thomas Gold, and Fred Hoyle (1948). While the theory enjoyed acceptance in the mid-20th century, it seems to have been refuted by the existence of cosmic background radiation, discovered by radio astronomers Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson.

17 Stephen P Elliott, Martha Goldstein, Michael Upshall (editors), *Webster's New World Encyclopedia, College Edition*. (New York, New York: Helicon Publishing and Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1993), p. 422.



18 Ibid., p. 871.

The figure below represents an artist's impression of the material ejected from the region around the supermassive black hole in the quasar SDSS J1106+1939. This object has the most energetic outflows ever seen, at least five times more powerful than any that have been observed to date. Quasars are extremely bright galactic centers powered by supermassive black holes. Many blast huge amounts of material out into their host galaxies, and these outflows play a key role in the evolution of galaxies.



19 Ibid., p. 507.

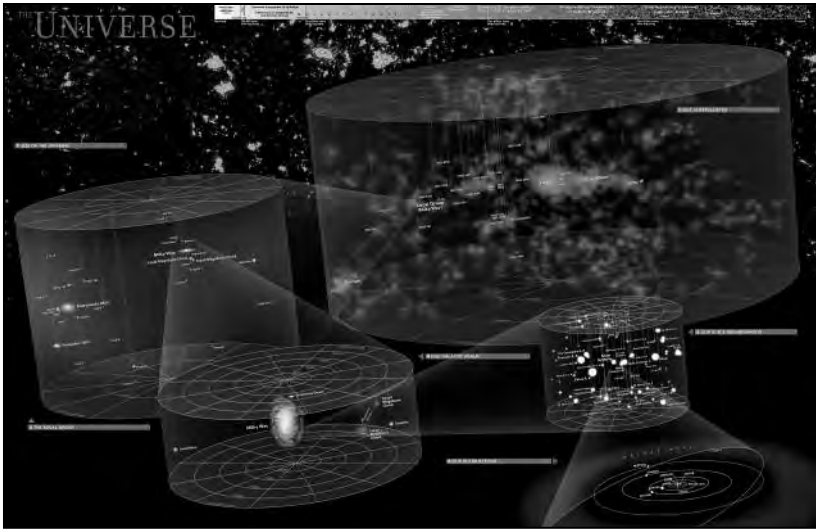
Local Group – in astronomy, a cluster of about 30 galaxies that includes the Milky Way. Like other groups of galaxies, the Local Group is held together by the gravitational attraction among its members, and does not expand with the expanding universe. Its two largest galaxies are the Milky Way and Andromeda; most of the others are small and faint.

As far as can be seen with ever-improving telescopes, there are at least a hundred billion galaxies arrayed throughout the universe. Each, like the Milky Way, is an “island universe” containing billions of stars. Nearly all galaxies are members of groups or *clusters*, which are part of even larger structures called *superclusters*. All of these large concentrations are connected by filaments or sheets of galaxies, which enclose huge, bubble-like volumes of empty space — the cosmic voids. The great unifier of the cosmos is gravity. It holds the stars of a galaxy, and galaxies of a cluster, together. But clusters, groups, and isolated individual galaxies are all flying away from each other, a continuing aftermath of the Big Bang, an explosion of space itself that astronomers believe formed the universe 11–15 billions years ago (currently, among cosmologists and astronomers, this is the most widely accepted explanation of the origin of the universe).

Insofar as the evolution of the universe is concerned, evidence from microwave observations of deep space combined with supercomputer modeling has allowed cosmologists to theorize about the structure of the universe from the Big Bang to the present. From the time that radiation and matter separated — 300,000 years or so after the Big Bang — gravity began drawing matter first into clumps, and then into stars. Perhaps a billion years later the first galaxies formed. As clusters of matter accumulated, the filament-and-void structure of today’s universe unfolded.

To have some idea of the size and location of the Local Group, and by extension the Milky Way, one must consider the size of the universe. So vast is space that just to find the Solar System, five leaps of scale must be made. In the image on the facing page (an expandable version of this graphic is available in the digital complement to this volume: www.icit-digital.org), the background represents roughly 1% of the diameter of the observable universe — a mere sliver of the sky — yet even the smallest dots represent not stars or galaxies, but great congregations of galaxies. Scattered clumps of dark matter and galaxies appear as bright colors in the image, which is based on a supercomputer simulation. Within this sliver lies the supercluster in which the Local Group is located.

Some 150 million light-years across, our supercluster is a great aggregation of clusters of galaxies. The supercluster is centered on the Virgo cluster, which itself contains thousands of galaxies. Among them is M87, which astronomers now know surrounds a gigantic black hole. Virgo’s gravity affects



the movement of its neighbors, including the Local Group. Virgo, the Ursa Major cluster, and other clusters float in our supercluster, last outposts before a space traveler would enter a nearly galaxy-free region called a cosmic void. Although our supercluster has a mass equaling some thousand trillion suns, virtually all its volume is empty — empty, that is, except for a certain density of dark matter, the hidden mass of the universe that helps hold galaxies and clusters together. Recent observations reveal that early in the universe’s history galaxies collided and merged more often than they do now. This indicates that they were more numerous in the past and that many have grown larger over billions of years.

Galaxies stretch in every direction beyond the Milky Way, but gravity keeps a family of some 30 galaxies including the Milky Way, loosely bound. This Local Group of galaxies extends some four million light-years across. Most galaxies in the group are considered dwarfs, but the two largest — the Milky Way and the Andromeda — are giant spirals. Andromeda is at the center of a small subgroup, which includes two elliptical galaxies, M32 and NGC 205, where star formation has ceased. Even though it is more than two million light-years away from Earth, the Andromeda galaxy can be seen readily with the naked eye. With even a small telescope, its bright bulge is unmistakable. All three main types of galaxies are represented in the Local Group: spirals, ellipticals, and irregulars. Nevertheless, the group has relatively few members, a hundredth that of some large galaxy clusters. The galaxies of the Local Group are traveling together through space. Measurements show that the Milky Way is falling toward Andromeda. No collision is expected however: like race cars on opposite straightaways, the two are most likely at opposite ends of a highly elongated orbit around the group’s center of mass.

Until the early-20th century, the best guess of astronomers was that the Milky Way galaxy was the entire universe. Now it is known that the Milky Way is only one of at least a hundred billion galaxies. The Milky Way is a spiral galaxy, and the Solar System is located in what is called the spiral's Orion arm, about 25,000 light-years from the center. Our Sun orbits the galactic center about once every 225 million years and has made the circuit about 20 times. In the spiral arms, new stars form as clouds of gas and dust condense; the stars' energy ionizes nearby parts of the clouds, causing them to glow. The central bulge of the galaxy glows with the light of older, redder stars. More ancient stars, orbiting the galaxy in a diffuse halo, formed more than 10 billion years ago. Several satellite galaxies cluster around the Milky Way. Two of them, the Large and the Small Magellanic Clouds, are visible on Earth only from its southern hemisphere. The closest galaxy is a small spheroid called the Sagittarius Dwarf.

The stars reaching 20 light-years in all directions from our Sun make up the solar neighborhood. Each light-year measures 5.9 trillion miles, yet the neighborhood is a tiny part of the Milky Way. Most of the stars shown in the graphic are too dim to be seen with the naked eye, but a few, such as Sirius and Procyon are beacons in the sky. In cosmic terms, the Sun is an ordinary yellow star, average in size and temperature. The hottest stars glow blue, the coolest shine red. Many stars are binary or multiple. Our nearest neighbor is the Alpha Centauri triple system, 4.3 light-years away. Closest of the three is Proxima Centauri (Alpha Centauri C), a red dwarf with one-tenth the mass and 1/17,000 the brightness of the Sun. In recent years, astronomers have discovered evidence of planets, similar to Jupiter in mass, orbiting stars. The closest example of another solar system is that of Gliese 876, a red dwarf approximately 15 light-years from Earth.

A tiny dot on the scale of the universe, the Solar System — man's home in the Milky Way — measures some 4.6 billion miles from the Sun to the farthest extent of Pluto's orbit. Sunlight reaches Earth in about eight minutes and Jupiter in 43 minutes, but it takes nearly seven hours to pass the orbit of Pluto. Beyond Neptune are icy bodies smaller than planets. These are Kuiper belt objects, over a hundred of which have been observed by telescope. Some astronomers suggest that Pluto is a Kuiper belt object, rather than a planet (but that debate has gone back and forth). Spread in a great sphere around the entire Solar System is the Oort cloud — trillions of comets, a few of which make spectacular visits to the Sun. (source: Stephen P. Maran, National Geographic Society, Washington, DC, 2006: <http://www.natgeomaps.com/the-universe-laminated>).

parsec – in astronomy, a unit (pc) used for distances to stars and galaxies; one parsec is equal to 3.2616 light-years. It is the distance at which a star would have a parallax (apparent shift in position) of one second of arc when

viewed from two points the same distance apart as the Earth’s distance from the Sun; or the distance at which one astronomical unit (au) subtends an angle of one second of arc. See also **Endnote 92** in Volume 2 and Endnote 479 in Volume 8.

light-year – also light year or lightyear (ly); a unit of length, equal to just under 10 trillion km (6 trillion miles). As defined by the International Astronomical Union (IAU), a light-year is the distance that light travels in a vacuum in one Julian year (365.25 Earth days).

The light-year is often used to measure distances to stars and other distances on a galactic scale, especially in non-specialist and popular science publications. The preferred unit in astrometry is the parsec, because it can be more easily derived from, and compared with, observational data. One light-year is equal to:

- exactly 9,460,730,472,580.8 km;
- about 5,878,625,373,183.6 miles;
- about 63,241.1 astronomical units;
- about 0.306595 parsecs; and
- exactly 31,557,600 light-seconds.

The figures above are based on a Julian, not Gregorian, year of exactly 365.25 days (each of exactly 86,400 Standard International seconds, totaling 31,557,600 seconds for the year) and a defined speed of light of 299,792,458 m/s, both included in the IAU System of Astronomical Constants (1976), used since 1984.

Distances measured in fractions of a light-year (or in light-months) usually involve objects within a star system. Distances measured in light-years include distances between nearby stars, such as those in the same spiral arm or globular cluster. One kilolight-year (kly) is 1,000 light-years (about 307 parsecs); kilolight-years are typically used to measure distances between parts of a galaxy. One megalight-year (Mly) is 1 million light-years (about 307 kiloparsecs); megalight-years are typically used to measure distances between neighboring galaxies and galaxy clusters. One gigalight-year (Gly) is 1 billion light-years — one of the largest distance measures used; gigalight-years are typically used to measure distances to supergalactic structures, including quasars and the Great Wall (an immense



galaxy filament, one of the largest known superstructures in the observable universe, discovered in 1989). See also Endnote 479 in Volume 8.

- 20 David Crystal (editor), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia, Second Edition*. (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 651–52.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās and recorded by al-Bazār.
 اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ فِي سَمْعِي نُورًا . وَفِي بَصَرِي نُورًا . وَفِي قَلْبِي نُورًا . وَفِي لِسَانِي نُورًا . وَعَنْ يَمِينِي نُورًا . وَعَنْ بَسَارِي نُورًا . وَقَدَّامِي نُورًا . وَخَلْفِي نُورًا . وَخَتِي نُورًا . وَفَوْقِي نُورًا . اللَّهُمَّ أَعْظِمْ لِي نُورًا.
- 24 Narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr and recorded in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and by al-Tirmidhī.
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ الْخَلْقَ فِي ظِلْمٍ ثُمَّ رَسَّ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ نُورِهِ فَمَنْ أَصَابَهُ نُورُهُ اهْتَدَى وَمَنْ أَخْطَأَهُ ضَلَّ.
- 25 According to ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās and Qatādah, and the various views were recorded by Abū al-Shaykh.
- 26 Stephen P Elliott et al., *Webster’s New World Encyclopedia*, p. 626.
- 27 **Thomas Henry Huxley** (1825–1895) – biologist, born in Ealing, Greater London. He studied medicine at London, worked as a naval surgeon, and developed his interest in natural history during a visit to the Australian coast. In 1854, he was appointed professor of natural history at the Royal School of Mines, and became the foremost expounder of Darwinism, to which he added an anthropological perspective in *Man’s Place in Nature* (1863). He also studied fossils, influenced the teaching of science in schools, and wrote essays on theology and philosophy from the viewpoint of an agnostic, a term he introduced. See also **Endnote 4** in Volume 6.



- 28 Phillipa Sandall, Valerie Marlborough, Dr. Tom McKnight (editors), *Geographica: the Complete Illustrated Atlas of the World*. (New South Wales, Australia: Random House Australia Pty Ltd, 2005), pp. 2–6.
- 29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

Nicolas Copernicus – refer to **Endnote 173** in Volume 2.

34 Ibid.

35 **Nobel Prizes** – prizes awarded each year from the income of a trust fund established by the will of Swedish scientist and industrialist, Alfred Nobel, to those who, in the opinion of the judges, have contributed most to the fields of physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature, and peace. The first prizes were awarded in 1901. A sixth prize, for economics, was established by the Swedish National Bank in 1968, and awarded for the first time in 1969. Each prizewinner receives a gold medal, and a sum of money.

George Gamow (1904–1968) – Ukrainian-American theoretical physicist and cosmologist, who worked with many of the pioneers of quantum theory. He is perhaps best known for his discovery of alpha decay via quantum tunnelling, and for his work on the radioactive decay of the atomic nucleus, including an early “liquid drop” model of the atom. His predictions of cosmic microwave background radiation and his explanation of the present levels of hydrogen and helium in the universe both lent important theoretical support to the Big Bang theory. However, he also published important papers on star formation, stellar nucleosynthesis, and genetics/DNA.



Gamow was also a highly successful science writer, and managed to convey the excitement of the revolution in physics and other scientific topics of interest to the common reader. In 1956, he was awarded the Kalinga Prize by UNESCO for his work in popularizing science through his *Mr. Tompkins...* series of books, as well as *One Two Three... Infinity* and other works (source: http://www.physicsoftheuniverse.com/scientists_gamow.html).

36 Phillipa Sandall et al., *Geographica*, pp. 2–6.

37 Ibid.

38 Edmund H. Harvey, Jr. et al. (editors), *Reader's Digest Book of Facts*. (Pleasantville, New York, USA: The Reader's Digest Association, Inc., 1987), pp. 382–83.

39 Ibid.

Fred Hoyle (1915–2001) – English astronomer and cosmologist, primarily remembered today for his contribution to the theory of stellar nucleosynthesis, and his often controversial stance on other cosmological and scientific matters, such as his rejection of the Big Bang theory in favor of a steady state universe and the panspermia theory of the origin of life on earth. He is considered one of the most creative and provocative astrophysicists of the second half of the 20th century. In the 1980s, he developed and promoted, along with Chandra Wickramasinghe, the theory of *panspermia*. This is the idea that the origin of life on Earth must have involved cells that arrived from space, and that evolution on earth is driven by a steady influx of viruses arriving from space via comets. He calculated the chances of the simplest living cell forming out of some primordial soup as infinitesimally small, and described that theory as “evidently nonsense of a high order” (source: http://www.physicsoftheuniverse.com/scientists_hoyle.html).



Chandra Wickramasinghe (1939–present) – Sri Lankan-born British mathematician, astronomer, and astrobiologist. His research interests include the interstellar medium, infrared astronomy, light scattering theory, applications of solid-state physics to astronomy, the early Solar System, comets, astrochemistry, the origin of life, and astrobiology. A student and collaborator of Fred Hoyle, the pair worked jointly for over 40 years as influential proponents of panspermia. In 1974, they proposed the hypothesis that some dust in interstellar space was largely organic. Wickramasinghe has written more than 30 books about astrophysics and related topics; he has made appearances on radio, television and film, and he writes online blogs and articles.



40 Phillipa Sandall et al., *Geographica*, p. 2.

James Hutton (1726–1797) – Scottish farmer and naturalist; known as the founder of modern geology. He was a great observer of the world around him, and made carefully reasoned geological arguments. Hutton came to believe that the Earth was perpetually being formed; for example, molten material

is forced up into mountains, eroded, and then eroded sediments are washed away. He recognized that the history of the Earth could be determined by understanding how processes such as erosion and sedimentation work in the present day. His ideas and approach to studying the Earth established geology as a proper science.



One of Hutton's key concepts was the Theory of Uniformitarianism. This was the belief that geological forces at work in the present day — barely noticeable to the human eye, yet immense in their impact — are the same as those that operated in the past. This means that the rates at which processes such as erosion or sedimentation occur today are similar to past rates, making it possible to estimate the times it took to deposit a sandstone, for example, of a given thickness. It became evident from such analysis that enormous lengths of time were required to account for the thicknesses of exposed rock layers. Uniformitarianism is one of the fundamental principles of earth science. Hutton's theories amounted to a frontal attack on a popular contemporary school of thought called catastrophism: the belief that only natural catastrophes, such as the Great Flood, could account for the form and nature of a 6,000-year-old Earth. The great age of the Earth was the first revolutionary concept to emerge from the new science of geology (source: <http://www.amnh.org/explore/resource-collections/earth-inside-and-out/james-hutton-the-founder-of-modern-geology/>).

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

Aurora Borealis – literally *dawn of the north*; also known as the “Northern Lights,” these are the dancing lights that appear above the magnetic north pole. Auroral displays appear in many colors although pale green and pink are the most common; shades of red, yellow, green, blue, and violet have been reported. The lights appear in many forms from patches or scattered clouds of light to streamers, arcs, rippling curtains, or shooting rays that light up the sky with an eerie glow.

The Northern Lights are actually the result of collisions between gaseous particles in the Earth's atmosphere with charged particles released from the Sun's atmosphere. Variations in color are due to the type of gas par-



ticles that are colliding. The most common auroral color, a pale yellowish-green, is produced by oxygen molecules located about 60 miles above the Earth. Rare, all-red auroras are produced by high-altitude oxygen, at heights of up to 200 miles. Nitrogen produces blue or purplish-red aurora.

The connection between the Northern Lights and sunspot activity has been suspected since about 1880. Thanks to research conducted since the 1950s, it is now known that electrons and protons from the Sun are blown toward the Earth on the solar wind. The temperature above the surface of the Sun is millions of degrees high. At this temperature, collisions between gas molecules are frequent and explosive. Free electrons and protons are thrown from the Sun's atmosphere by the rotation of the Sun and escape through holes in the magnetic field. Blown toward the Earth by the solar wind, the charged particles are largely deflected by the Earth's magnetic field. However, the Earth's magnetic field is weaker at either pole and therefore some particles enter the Earth's atmosphere and collide with gas particles. These collisions emit light that can be seen as the dancing lights of the north (and the south, where the phenomenon is called Aurora Australis). The lights of the Aurora generally extend from 80 km (50 miles) to as high as 640 km (400 miles) above the Earth's surface (source: <http://www.northernlightscentre.ca/northernlights.html>).

46 Phillipa Sandall et al., *Geographica*, pp. 30–31.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 **Ād** – great and ancient people frequently mentioned in the Qur’an, “...who built monuments upon high places” (26:128). They were the recipients of a divine message through the agency of the Prophet Hūd (حُودٍ), upon the rejection of which, they were destroyed by God (7:63 and 26:123–135). Their city, perhaps their tribe, was also called “Iram of the pillars” (or perhaps “tent-poles”). Whether Ād and “Iram of the pillars” are one and the same depends upon one’s interpretation of the relevant Qur’anic āyāt (89:6–7); the identification cannot be definitively established as of yet. Islamic historians generally place Ād in the south of Arabia but some commentators on the Qur’an say, doubtless in a symbolical sense, that the ancient Israelis had to fight remnants of the tribe of Ād when they entered the Holy Land. Ād is considered to be one of the tribes of the original Arabians.
- 56 **Gilgamesh Epic** – Babylonian epic poem (a long, narrative poem that is usually about heroic deeds and events that are significant to the culture of the poet; ancient writers used epic poetry to tell tales of intense adventures and heroic feats), partially preserved in different versions, named after its hero, the Sumerian king Gilgamesh (3rd millennium BCE). It describes Gilgamesh’s legendary adventures, and narrates a story of the Flood that has striking parallels with the Biblical account.
- 57 Norris McWhirter (compiler), *Norris McWhirter’s Book of Historical Records*. (London, United Kingdom: Virgin Publishing Ltd, 2000), pp. 38–39.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid., p. 132.

66 The earliest empire dates from circa 3200BCE, when Meni (Menes, in Greek), the first pharaoh, unified the Upper and Lower Egyptian kingdoms. He made Memphis, at the apex of the Nile River delta, his capital. In the Egyptian 5th Dynasty (circa 2725BCE), imperialistic ambition led to military expeditions to the west into Libya, into Sudanese Nubia to the south, and to the north into the territories of Canaan and Syria. In spite of this expansion, what caused the empire to go under? Secular historians seem to be disinterested in the reason for the empire's collapse along with its social order.

The world saw eight more empires. The first was the Akkadian Empire in which Sargon (ruled from 2334–2279BCE) dominated all the city-states of Mesopotamia, embracing the whole of Akkadia (north) and Sumeria (south), and extending into what is now northern Syria and western Iran. The Akkadian Empire survived until 2004BCE, when Elamites took the Akkadian city of Ur and captured its last ruler, Ibbi-Sin. Why are secular history books wont to ignore the reasons for the crumbling of this empire and its community?

The second was the Indus Valley civilization, centered on the cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, which may be described as an empire. It dates all the way back to circa 2500BCE, and it stretched from the Himalayas to the Arabian Sea, exceeding 390,000 square miles (1 million km²). This mysterious civilization appears to have been destroyed by invading warrior-nomads, the Aryans, around 1500BCE. But is there any detailed information about its demise and what made it vulnerable to outside conquering forces? This and other questions have generally been evaded by institutions and establishments that discard scripture and the life-saving information in it.

The Assyrian Empire is the third in this series. It was born in the Tigris River valley, circa 2500BCE. Ashur-uballit (ruled, circa 1363–1328BCE), first king of the Middle Assyrian Empire, began military campaigns against the neighboring Babylonians, and succeeding rulers expanded the empire to include Egypt and the territories between present-day Palestine and the Persian Gulf. A coalition of Babylonians and the Medes, an ancient Iranian people who lived in what is now northwestern Iran, finally destroyed the

capital, Nineveh, in 612BCE. Once again, there appears to be no secular answer to what makes a people’s capital destroyable.

The fourth major empire, Babylon, had two brief lives. The first, under Hammurabi (ruled, circa 1795–1750BCE), was defeated by the Hittites. A second empire, which was built by Nebuchadnezzar II (ruled, 604–562BCE), fell to the Persian empire-builder, Cyrus, who entered Babylon in 539BCE.

Cyrus II (ruled, 559–530BCE), also known as Cyrus the Great or Shahanshah (“king of kings”) of Persia, established an empire from the Indus River in the east to the Aegean Sea in the west, the fifth of the eight. His son, Cambyses II (ruled, 529–522BCE), added Egypt to Persian conquests, while Darius I (ruled, 522–486BCE) invaded Greece but was defeated in the Battle of Marathon in 490BCE.

Sixth, the Seleucid Empire (312–64BCE) was established by Alexander the Great’s general, Seleucus Nicator (circa 358–280BCE), when he captured Mesopotamia, Syria, and most of Persia. It fell to the Romans in 64BCE.

Seventh in the series was the Carthaginian Empire, so named from the Latin name Carthago for the Phoenician colony of QRT HDST (meaning *new city*) on the north-eastern coast of Tunisia; it was founded circa 770BCE. Its influence by 400BCE extended from Libya to Morocco, into Sardinia, southern Spain and western Sicily. The Roman Republic launched the first of the three Punic Wars against the Carthaginians in 264BCE when the Romans wrested back control of Sicily. In the Second Punic War of 218–210BCE, the Carthaginian general Hannibal (circa 247–182BCE) crossed the Alps from Spain to inflict severe defeats on the Romans, before being forced out in 203BCE. In the third and final war of 149–146BCE, the Romans razed Carthage and incorporated the entire region into their empire.

And finally, the Chinese empire predates the first Ch’in or Qin emperor, Shih Huang-Ti (ruled, 221–210BCE). Its zenith was reached in the Western Han Dynasty (circa 100BCE) under Emperor Hsiao-wu-ti, with conquests in Vietnam, Manchuria, Korea, and Japan.

67 Norris McWhirter, *Norris McWhirter’s Book of Historical Records*, pp. 126–29.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

- 73 Ibid.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 Patrick J. Buchanan, *The Death of the West*. (New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), pp. 43–46.
- 78 **Roe versus Wade** (1973) – US Supreme Court decision in 1973 dealing with the constitutionality of state anti-abortion laws. The case challenged a Texas statute prohibiting the abortion of pregnancies that did not threaten the mother's life. The Supreme Court struck down the Texas law, ruling that state prohibition of abortion is unconstitutional on two grounds: (1) women are guaranteed the right to privacy by the 14th Amendment, and (2) unborn fetuses are not persons with the right to equal protection of the law. The highly controversial ruling limited state regulation to the prohibition of third-trimester abortions. Refer also **Endnote 13** in Volume 6.
- 79 Patrick J. Buchanan, *The Death of the West*, pp. 198–200.
- 80 Dr. Geoffrey Wigoder (editor-in-chief), *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*. (New York, New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1992), pp. 52–53.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 **Book of Enoch** – ancient Jewish religious work, ascribed by tradition to Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah, although modern scholars estimate the older sections (mainly in the Book of the Watchers) to date from about 300BCE, and the latest part (Book of Parables) probably to the first century BCE. It is not part of the biblical canon as used by Jews, apart from Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jews). Most Christian denominations and traditions may accept the Books of Enoch as having some historical or theological interest, but they generally regard the Books of Enoch as non-canonical or non-inspired. It is regarded as canonical by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, but not by any other Christian groups.
- It is wholly extant only in the Ge'ez language, with Aramaic fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls and a few Greek and Latin fragments. For this and other reasons, the traditional Ethiopian belief is that the original language of

the work was Ge‘ez, whereas non-Ethiopian scholars tend to assert that it was first written in either Aramaic or Hebrew; Ephraim Isaac (a scholar of ancient semitic languages and civilization, and African/Ethiopian languages and religion; teaches at Princeton University) suggests that the Book of Enoch, like the Book of Daniel, was composed partially in Aramaic and partially in Hebrew. No Hebrew version is known to have survived. It is asserted in the book itself that its author was Enoch, before the biblical Flood.

The authors of the New Testament were familiar with the content of the story and influenced by it: a short section of the Book of 1 Enoch (1 Enoch, 1:9 or 1 Enoch, 2:1 depending on the translation) is quoted in the New Testament, Epistle of Jude (Jude, 1:14–15), and is attributed there to “Enoch the Seventh from Adam” (1 Enoch, 60:8). The text was also utilized by the community that originally collected the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The first part of the Book of Enoch describes the fall of the Watchers, the angels who fathered the Nephilim. The remainder of the book describes Enoch’s visits to heaven in the form of travels, visions, and dreams; and his revelations. The book consists of five quite distinct major sections (see each section for details):

- *The Book of the Watchers* (1 Enoch, 1–36);
- *The Book of Parables of Enoch* (1 Enoch, 37–71), also called the *Similitudes of Enoch*;
- *The Astronomical Book* (1 Enoch, 72–82), also called the *Book of the Heavenly Luminaries* or *Book of Luminaries*;
- *The Book of Dream Visions* (1 Enoch, 83–90), also called the *Book of Dreams*; and
- *The Epistle of Enoch* (1 Enoch, 91–108).

Most scholars believe that these five sections were originally independent works (with different dates of composition), themselves a product of much editorial arrangement, and were only later redacted into what is now called *1 Enoch*.

83 Dr. Geoffrey Wigoder, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, pp. 52–53.

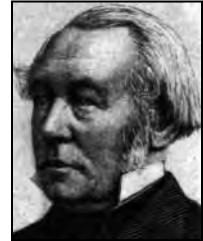
84 Ibid.

Aristotle’s “Higher Intelligences” refers to his categorization of human virtues as intellectual and ethical, the first of which concerns theoretical reasoning and practical thinking, and the second of which builds on the core virtues of courage, justice, temperance, and wisdom.

85 Rev. Joseph L. Weidenhan, *A Catholic Dictionary for the Catholic Laity*. (Baltimore, Maryland, USA: J.H. Furst Co., 1916), p. 14.

- 86 Angus Stevenson and Christine A. Lindberg (editors), *New Oxford American Dictionary, 3rd Edition*. (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 7,369.
- 87 **jinn** – unseen, intelligent beings; an independent species of intelligent and advanced life that will be held accountable, like humans, on the Day of Judgement. Their composition is from the substance of the fire, whereas man’s composition is from the substance of clay. See also **Endnote 390** in Volume 5.
- 88 David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia*, pp. 404, 1164.
- 89 Ibid.
- 90 Willam H. Gentz, *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion*, p. 685.
- 91 **Karl Barth** – refer to **Endnote 115** in Volume 3 and **Endnote 423** in Volume 7.

Albrecht Ritschl (1822–1889) – German Lutheran theologian who showed both the religious and ethical relevance of the Christian faith by synthesizing the teaching of the scriptures and the Protestant Reformation with some aspects of modern knowledge. Most of the results of Ritschl’s scholarship were presented in his major work, *Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung* (*The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, 1870–1874).



Influenced heavily by Immanuel Kant, Ritschl viewed religion as the triumph of the spirit (or moral agent) over humanity’s natural origins and environment. But he rejected for use in theology what he understood to be the impersonal generalizations of metaphysics and the natural sciences. The mystical and intuitive elements of the religious life were also completely foreign to his activist outlook; the goal of Christian life, he maintained, is work in and for the Kingdom of God. Against Protestant pietism, which emphasized the spiritual piety of the individual, Ritschl argued persuasively for the ethical development of man in the context of his community, which for Ritschl took precedence even over the church itself.

Ritschl shared with Friedrich Schleiermacher the belief that for Christianity, God is not known as self-existent; He is known only insofar as He conditions human trust in his self-revelation through Christ. Ritschl rejected such doctrines as original sin, the miraculous birth of Christ, the Trinity, and the Incarnation. His attempt to apply the tenets of Kantian phi-

losophy to Protestant Christianity was typical of an era that had little feeling for the mystery of religion and no dread of a divine judgement. His effort to maintain a theology of divine revelation without the faith in miracles underlying the older dogma was attacked by both liberal and conservative critics, but his influence on German Protestant theology in the second half of the 19th century was nevertheless immense (source: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Albrecht-Ritschl>).

92 Willam H. Gentz, *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion*, p. 685.

93 Narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd who related it to al-Nawwās ibn Sam‘ān, and recorded by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Nisā’ī, Ibn Ḥabbān, and al-Tirmidhī.

إِنَّ لِلشَّيْطَانِ مِثَّةً بَابِنِ آدَمَ وَلِلْمَلَكِ مِثَّةً فَأَمَّا مِثَّةُ الشَّيْطَانِ . فإِيعَادُ النَّسْرِ . وَتَكْذِيبُ الْحَقِّ . وَأَمَّا مِثَّةُ الْمَلِكِ . فإِيعَادُ بِالْخَيْرِ . وَتَصْدِيقُ الْحَقِّ . فَمَنْ وَجَدَ ذَلِكَ فَلْيَعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَلْيَحْمَدِ اللَّهَ . وَمَنْ وَجَدَ الْآخَرَ . فَلْيَتَعَوَّذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ .

94 At least this is the way Western history is written; unfortunately, most histories are not written by the victims and the oppressed. In many instances, written records of the histories of ancient civilizations were destroyed by their conquerors, and so what remains are pieces of puzzles that interest archaeologists and career historians.

95 Norris McWhirter, *Norris McWhirter’s Book of Historical Records*, pp. 183–87.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid.

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid.

111 Ibid.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid.

115 **easement** – in English law, a right exercised by one landowner over the land of another. The easement must benefit the land of its owner, and would be extinguished if both properties (the dominant and servient tenements) are subsequently owned and occupied by one person. A private right of way may exist as an easement, though a person may instead have permission to cross land by virtue of a license. Easements may be expressly granted or by implication; they may also be acquired through long use (prescription). Further examples include easement of light, the support of buildings, and the taking of water. Certain matters may not be the subject of an easement, such as an unspoiled view, though in this particular case a restrictive covenant against building may achieve the desired effect.

116 David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia*, p. 35.

117 Ibid., p. 278.

118 Ibid., p. 292.

119 Ibid., p. 421.

120 Ibid., pp. 438, 639.

121 Ibid., pp. 749–50.

122 Ibid., p. 934.

123 Ibid., p. 1122.

124 Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey (editors), *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society*. (New York, New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 686–90.

125 Ibid.

126 Ibid.

127 Ibid.

128 Ibid.

128 Ibid.

130 Ibid.

131 Ibid.

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid.

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid.

137 Ibid.

138 Ibid.

139 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah and recorded in the Ṣaḥīḥs of Muslim and al-Bukhārī; in the latter, the wording is, “...My mercy overwhelms My anger.”

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَّا خَلَقَ الْخَلْقَ كَتَبَ كِتَابًا عِنْدَهُ فَوْقَ الْعَرْشِ “إِنْ رَحِمْتِي سَبَقَتْ غَضَبِي” (و فِي رِوَايَةِ الْبُخَارِيِّ “...إِنْ رَحِمْتِي غَلَبَتْ غَضَبِي”).

140 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

جَعَلَ اللَّهُ جَلًّا وَعَمَلًا الرَّحْمَةَ مِئَةَ جُرْعٍ فَأَمْسَكَ عِنْدَهُ تِسْعَةً وَتِسْعِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ فِي الْأَرْضِ جُرْعًا وَاحِدًا فَمِنْ ذَلِكَ الْجُرْعِ يَتْرَاحَهُمُ الْخَلَائِقُ حَتَّى تَرْفَعَ الدَّابَّةُ حَافِرَهَا عَنْ وَدْيِهَا خَشْيَةً أَنْ تُصِيبَهُ.

141 Narrated by Salmān al-Fārsī, and recorded in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim.

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مِئَةَ رَحْمَةٍ فَمِنْهَا رَحْمَةٌ يَتَرَاخَمُ بِهَا الْخَلْقُ بَيْنَهُمْ وَتَسْعَةٌ وَتَسْعُونَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ.

142 Narrated by ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

قدم على رسول الله صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِسَبْيِ إِذَا امْرَأَةٌ مِنَ السَّبْيِ تَسْعَى قَدْ خَلَبَ ثَدْيُهَا إِذْ وَجَدَتْ صَبِيًّا فِي السَّبْيِ فَأَخَذَتْهُ فَأَلْصَقَتْهُ بِبَطْنِهَا فَأَرْضَعَتْهُ فَقَالَ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "أَتَرَوْنَ هَذِهِ الْمَرْأَةَ طَارِحَةً وَلَدَهَا فِي النَّارِ؟" قُلْنَا "لَا وَاللَّهِ وَهِيَ تَقْدِرُ عَلَى الْآ تَطْرَحَهُ." قَالَ "فَاللَّهُ تَعَالَى أَرْحَمُ بِعِبَادِهِ مِنْ هَذِهِ بَوَائِبِهَا."

143 Narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr and recorded in the *sunan* of Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī.

الرَّاحِمُونَ يَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى . اِرْحَمُوا مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَرْحَمَكُم مَن فِي السَّمَاءِ.

144 Narrated by Jarīr ibn ‘Abdillāh and recorded in the books of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and al-Tirmidhī.

لَا يَرْحَمُ اللَّهُ مَنْ لَا يَرْحَمُ النَّاسَ.

145 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

مَنْ لَا يَرْحَمُ لَا يُرْحَمُ.

146 Paul Barry Clarke, *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society*, pp. 29–33.

147 Ibid.

148 Ibid.

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid.

151 Ibid.

152 Ibid.

153 Ibid.

154 Ibid.

John Rawls (1921–2002) – philosopher, born in Baltimore, Maryland, United States; became professor at Harvard University in 1962. His book, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), has probably been the most discussed text in social and political philosophy since WWII, reviving an interest in social contract theory, rights, and liberalism.

155 Ibid.

156 Ibid.

157 **Peter Singer** (1946–present) – Australian academic, philosopher, environmental activist, and writer whose work in applied ethics has led to controversial views on abortion, animal liberation, and infanticide; over the course of his long career, he has become one of the leading bioethicists and one of the founders of the animal rights movement. While a lecturer at Oxford University in the early-1970s, he became a committed vegetarian and articulated a careful argument that gave moral standing to animals. He also drew greater awareness to abuses at factory farms and scientific research, while also helping to lay the groundwork for other debates around stem-cell research and third-trimester abortions.



Driving much of his work is his own embrace of utilitarianism, an ethical philosophy that holds that the best actions are those that maximize happiness and reduce suffering. Singer has been a strong proponent of eliminating poverty, arguing that anyone who has more than they need should be giving to those in need. In what some consider his most controversial work, *Practical Ethics* (1979), Singer looked closely at why and how a living being's interests should be valued. The work tackled a number of hot-button topics as Singer evaluated the philosophical and ethical underpinnings behind sex discrimination, animal welfare, foreign aid and abortion. Among pro-life activists in particular, Singer has proven to be a popular target. His belief that a newborn should not be considered a person until 30 days after its birth, and his allowance that physicians should have the right to kill some disabled babies, has drawn condemnation from anti-abortion leaders from around the world.

158 Ibid.

159 Ibid.

160 Ibid.

161 Ibid.

162 Ibid.

163 Ibid.

164 Ibid.

165 Ibid.

166 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah and recorded by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and Mālik.

بينما رجلٌ يمشي بطريق اشتدَّ عليه العطشُ فوجدَ بئراً فنزلَ فيها فشرب. ثمَّ خرجَ فإذا كلبٌ يلهثُ يأكلُ التُّرى منَ العَطِشِ. فقالَ الرَّجُلُ "لقد بلغَ هذا الكلبُ منَ العطشِ مثلَ الَّذي كانَ بلغَ بي" فنزلَ البئرَ فملا خَمَّهُ ثمَّ أمسكَهُ بفيه فسقى الكلبَ. فشكرَ اللهُ لَهُ فغفرَ لَهُ. قالوا "يا رسولَ اللهِ وإنَّ لنا في البهائمِ أجرًا؟ فقالَ "في كلِّ ذاتِ كبدٍ رطبةٍ أجرٌ"

167 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah and recorded by Muslim.

أنَّ امرأةً بَغِيًّا رأت كلبًا في يومٍ حارٍّ يطيفُ ببئرٍ. قد أدلَّعَ لسانه من العطشِ. فنزعتُ له موقها فغُيرَ لها به.

168 Narrated by ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd and recorded by Abū Dāwūd.

كنا مع رسولِ اللهِ صلى اللهُ عليه وسلم في سفرٍ فأنطلقَ حاجته. فرأينا حمرةً معها فرخان فأخذنا فرخيها فجاءت الحمرة فجعلت تفرش. فجاء النبي صلى اللهُ عليه وسلم فقال "من فجع هذه بولدها؟ ردوا ولدها إليها." ورأى قرية نملٍ قد حرقناها فقال "من حرق هذه؟" قلنا "نحن." قال "إنه لا ينبغي أن يعذب بالنار إلا رب النار"

169 Paul Barry Clarke, *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society*, pp. 69–72.

170 Ibid.

171 Ibid.

172 Ibid.

173 Ibid.

174 Ibid.

175 Ibid.

176 Ibid.

177 Ibid.

178 Ibid.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) – German philosopher; the most influential thinker of the Idealist movement. Hegel derived his famous dialectical method from studying the history of Greek philosophy and saw the universe as a single system developing in time, in which the whole gives each part its own full meaning. The idea, in Hegel's terms, is like a prayer, recited first by a young child, hardly aware of what the words mean; and then once the child has grown into an old man who has seen life, he has come to grasp the deeper significance of the words. See also Endnote 93 in Volume 3, **Endnote 382** in Volume 5, and **Endnote 284** in Volume 7.



noumenon – in Kantian philosophy, the object, itself inaccessible to experience, to which a phenomenon is referred for the basis or cause of its sense content — a thing as it is in and of itself, as distinct from a thing as it is knowable by the senses through phenomenal attributes.

179 Paul Barry Clarke, *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society*, pp. 69–72.

180 Ibid.

181 Ibid.

182 Ibid.

Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) – French novelist and essayist, concerned mainly with the existentialist concept of the importance of freedom in a life subject to laws and controls. Together with Sartre, she founded the literary review *Les Temps Modernes* (*Modern Times*, 1946) and is the author of the treatise *Le Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex*, 1949) and *Les Mandarins* (*The Mandarins*, 1954). Perhaps her most interesting works are the volumes of reminiscences, *Memoires d'une Jeune Fille rangée* (*Memoirs of a Well-Behaved Girl*, 1958) and *La Force de l'Age* (*The Prime of Life*, 1960). See also **Endnote 10** in Volume 6.

183 Paul Barry Clarke, *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society*, pp. 69–72.

184 Ibid.

185 Ibid.

186 Ibid.

John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) – English empiricist philosopher, logician, economist, and social reformer. His *System of Logic* (1843) described the basic rules for all scientific reasoning. As a student of Jeremy Bentham, he elaborated on utilitarian ethics; in *On Liberty* (1859), he presented a plea for the sanctity of individual rights against the power of any government. See also **Endnote 322** in Volume 5, **Endnote 323** in Volume 7, and **Endnote 372** in Volume 10.



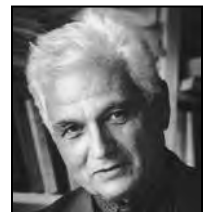
Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) – philosopher, born in Marburg, Germany; he studied at Munich and Marburg. A pupil of Heidegger, he became rector at Leipzig and held chairs at Frankfurt (1947) and Heidelberg (1949–1968). His major work is *Wahrheit und Methode* (*Truth and Method*, 1960) in which he develops his theory of hermeneutics (the branch of theology that deals with the principles of exegesis), exploring the nature of understanding and interpretation.



Michel Foucault (1926–1984) – philosopher and historian of ideas, born in Poitiers, France. A student of the Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, he became professor at the College de France, Paris (1970). His very influential books include *Histoire de la folie* (*Madness and Civilization*, 1961), *Les Mots et les choses* (*The Order of Things*, 1966), *L'Archeologie du savoir* (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1969), and *Histoire de la sexualite* (*The History of Sexuality*, 1976). In these he explored the changing historical assumptions about what counts as “knowledge” at any one time, and argued that those in power define such categories as insanity, illness, and criminality to identify and oppress the “deviants.”



Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) – philosopher, born in Algeria. He studied at Paris University, and went on to teach at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. His critique of the referentiality of language and the objectivity of structures founded the school of criticism called deconstruction. Among his highly influential works are *De la grammatologie* (*Of Grammatology*, 1967), *L'écriture et la*



difference (*Writing and Difference*, 1967), and *La dissemination* (*Dissemination*, 1972). The award of an honorary degree by Cambridge University in 1992 was publicly contested, prompting attacks on and defenses of his work.

Michael (Joseph) Oakeshott (1901–1990) – philosopher and political theorist, born in Harpenden, Hertfordshire. He taught at Cambridge and the London School of Economics. His first and main philosophical work was *Experience and Its Modes* (1933). His political theory was conservative, pragmatic, and skeptical of systematization and ideology, as represented in *Rationalism in Politics* (1962) and *On Human Conduct* (1975).



Alasdair MacIntyre (1929–present) – Scottish born, British educated moral and political philosopher who has worked in the United States since 1970. His work in ethics and politics reaches across disciplines, drawing on sociology and philosophy of the social sciences as well as Greek and Latin classical literature. MacIntyre began his career as a Marxist, but in the late-1950s, he started working to develop a Marxist ethics that could rationally justify the moral condemnation of Stalinism. That project eventually led him to reject Marxism along with every other form of “modern liberal individualism” and to propose Aristotle’s ethics as a more effective way to renew moral agency and practical rationality through small-scale moral formation within communities. MacIntyre’s best known book, *After Virtue* (1981), is the product of this long ethical project. MacIntyre has played an important role in the renewal of Aristotelian ethics and politics in the last three decades, and has made a valued contribution to the advancement of Thomistic (referring to St. Thomas Aquinas) philosophy (source: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/mac-over/>).



- 187 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *Al-Tafsir al-Munir fi al-'Aqidah wa-al-Shari'ah wa-al-Manhaj*, Volume 7. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āshir, 1411AH), p. 156.

Abū al-Mundhir Hishām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī (died 206AH) – member of a family of scholars from al-Kūfah; he addressed himself to the study of the Hadith and history. According to various historians, al-Kalbī wrote between 118 and 121 works. Among his surviving works is *Kitāb al-Aṣnām* (*The Book about Idols*), which is a source on the idolatry of pre-Islamic times (it was a principle in early Islamic scholarship that to report on heresy was not itself considered heresy).

He relates that the poet-king Imru' al-Qays consulted the divining arrows of the idol Dhū al-Khalaṣāh (a piece of cut quartz crystal) in Tabālah before setting out to attack Banū Asad; the arrows were called the “demander” (*al-āmir*), the “forbidder” (*al-nahy*), and the “vigilant” (*al-mu-tarabbiṣ*). Upon drawing the “forbidder” three times, he broke the arrows and hurled them at the idol exclaiming, “Go bite your father’s phallus! Had it been your father who was murdered, you would not have forbidden me avenging him.” He then raided Banū Asad and defeated them; and thus he was the first to denounce this idol.

Al-Kalbī relates that there was a Ka’bah of Sindād in the region between al-Kūfah and al-Baṣrah, but he says it was not a place of worship as much as it was a celebrated edifice. And another, the Ka’bah of Najrān, is mentioned by al-A’shā in one of his odes; this too, al-Kalbī says was not claimed as a place of worship but merely a hall. However, in the *Dīwān*, al-A’shā says, “... to visit the Ka’bah of Najrān is an ordinance incumbent upon you.”

Jarīr ibn ‘Abdillāh, who entered Islam at the liberation of Makkah or in the last six months of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) life, was sent to destroy Dhū al-Khalaṣāh, which was located six days south of Makkah in the direction of Ṣan‘ā’. He apparently had to kill 300 custodians and others who defended it. Dhū al-Khalaṣāh, which was made of white quartz crystal, was turned into the doorstep of the *masjid* of Tabālah, the site of the idol. Regarding Dhū al-Khalaṣāh, al-Kalbī cites a hadith, “*This world shall not pass away until the buttocks of the women of Daws wiggle [again] around Dhū al-Khalaṣāh and they worship it as they were wont to do [before Islam].*”^a

a Narrated by Abū Hurayrah and recorded by al-Bukhārī in the chapter on *fitan*.

لا تقوم الساعة حتى تضطرب ألبابك نساء دؤيب حول ذي الخلصة طاغية دؤيب التي كانوا يعبدونها في الجاهلية.

188 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *Al-Tafsir al-Munir*, Volume 7, p. 156.

al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (21–110AH/632–728CE) – famous Sufi, born in Madinah; the son of a freed slave. He settled in al-Baṣrah (Iraq), where he became known for his learning. During the reign of the Umayyads, when intellectual activity was at a low ebb, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was a lighthouse who attracted a large circle of students.

His school of learning dealt with all the ideas that were to grow into Islamic law, theology, and Sufism. He is a link in the transmission of many hadiths, having known a good number of companions in Madinah; most of the Sufi initiatory chains (*silsilahs*) pass through him. The Mu’tazilah started out, according to tradition, by breaking away from his school. Al-Ḥasan al-

Başrī, a giant of his age, left no writings, but was quoted widely by others. To judge from his influence, his scope and depth were as great as any of the later major figures whose work was more extensively recorded. He was famous for the saying, “The world is a bridge upon which you cross but upon which you should not build” (in India, this is attributed to Jesus (ﷺ) and is an inscription at Fatehpur Sikri). He is also reported to have said,

Allah made fasting as a training ground for His servants, that they may run to His obedience. Some win that race and get the prize; others fail, and go away disappointed. But, by my life! If the lid were off, the well-doer would be too busy about his well-doing, as the evil-doer in his evil-doing, to get him a new garment or anoint his hair.

The wonder is not how the lost were lost, but how the saved were saved. Fear must be stronger than hope, for where hope is stronger than fear, the heart will rot. My asceticism is mere lust, and my patience cowardice; and all my asceticism in this world is lust for the Other, the quintessence of lust. But how excellent is a man whose patience is for Allah’s sake, not for the sake of deliverance from Hell; and his asceticism for Allah’s sake, not for the sake of entry into Heaven. One grain of *taqwā* is better than a thousandfold weight of fasting and prayer.”

The *Waṣīyah* of Maḥmūd ibn ‘Īsā contains the following counsels of al-Ḥasan al-Başrī to his spiritual disciples,

One must seek to have the ten qualities of a dog: to sleep little during the night, which is a characteristic of a truly fervent soul; not to complain of the heat or the cold, which is the virtue of patient hearts; not to leave behind an inheritance, which is the character of true devotion; never to be angry or envious, which is the character of the *mu’min*; to keep away from those who devour, which is the nature of the poor; not to have a fixed abode, which is the quality of being a pilgrim; to be content with what we are thrown to eat, which is the virtue of moderation; to sleep where we find ourselves, which is the characteristic of a satisfied heart; never to mistake who is our Master, and if he strikes us, to return to Him, which is the quality of hearts that are aware; and to be always hungry, which is the characteristic of men of virtue. And to be with the crowd dims the light of the heart.

See also **Endnote 198** in Volume 7.

189 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zīlāl al-Qur'ān, Volume 2*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Shurūq, 1405AH), 11th ed., p. 1057

190 **George Orwell** (1903–1950) – pseudonym of Eric Arthur Blair; novelist and essayist, born in Motihari, Bengal, India. Educated at Eton, he served in Burma in the Indian Imperial Police (1922–1927), and was wounded in the Spanish Civil War. He developed his own brand of socialism in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) and many essays, and also wrote four novels in the 1930s, notably *Coming Up for Air* (1939). During WWII, he was a war correspondent for the BBC. He is best known for his satire of totalitarian ideology in *Animal Farm* (1945), and the prophetic novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949).



191 Joel Krieger (editor-in-chief), *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*. (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 425–28.

192 Ibid.

193 Ibid.

194 Ibid.

195 Ibid.

196 Ibid.

197 Ibid.

198 Ibid.

199 Ibid.

200 Ibid.

201 Ibid.

202 Ibid.

203 Ibid.

204 Ibid.

205 **Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ** (circa 39BH–19AH) – also known as Bilāl al-Ḥabashī; first *mu‘adhdhin* (caller to *ṣalāh*). An African slave from Abyssinia, Bilāl was an early convert to Islam who, because his master severely mistreated him for his Islamic convictions, was ransomed and freed by his fellow convert Abū Bakr. When the call to *ṣalāh*, rather than a summons by bells, was instituted, Bilāl was chosen for his fine voice, despite his imperfect pronunciation of Arabic. He made the call from the top of the Ka‘bah when the Prophet entered Makkah in the pilgrimage in the 8th year of the Hijrah as allowed by the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah, and again the following year when the Prophet (ﷺ) entered the city in triumph. He served the Prophet himself and was the chamberlain to the first successors of the Prophet (رضي الله عنهم). Bilāl accompanied the Islamic armies to Syria and some accounts say he is buried there.

Ṣuhayb al-Rūmī (born circa 35BH) – companion of the Prophet (ﷺ); the first Byzantine Greek to convert to Islam.

206 **shirk** – literally *association*; fundamental error at the root of all sin or transgression. It is the “association” of something with Allah, other than Allah (ﷻ) Himself. Allah is the Absolute, meaning that He is Complete, He is Totality, He is Reality. Nothing can be added to Him, and nothing can be taken away. He is All-Possibility. He is One and Indivisible.

To set anything (or anyone) alongside Allah (ﷻ) as Reality is to commit the sin — the error that engages human consciousness and being — of “association,” which is the only sin He will not forgive, because it denies His self, and prevents forgiveness, **“Allah forgives not that any should be associated with Him; less than that He forgives to whomsoever He wills: [therefore] whosoever associates with Allah anything, has gone astray into far error” (4:116).**

The sin of *shirk* (association) is a name for paganism; pagans are called *the associatory* (*mushriks*). It is also atheism, or the putting of nothingness in the place of Allah (ﷻ). *Shirk* is the fundamental state of being in revolt against Allah, irrespective of any professed belief in other gods; it is the opposite of surrender to Allah (ﷻ), which is acceptance and recognition of His Reality: knowledge, or in other words, Islam. Because Islam is knowledge (in this sense, not literally), it is initiated by the act of recognition: the *shahādah* (perceiving and declaring that “there is no deity/authority but Allah”).

207 **polytheism** – belief in and worship of many gods. As some Western theologians may say, polytheism is really a matter of quality rather than quantity; the polytheist not only has more deities than the monotheist, but experiences the sacred in a profoundly different way. Instead of seeing all that is ultimately under a single divine being or will, he sees divinity as finite (sometimes mortal) but richly diversified, linked to innumerable particular

places, functions, or moods. While polytheism frequently tends toward unity, either under an impersonal, universal force or a potentially monotheistic “king of the gods,” particularism is its most salient characteristic.

Despite its much-discussed “high gods,” primitive or deviant religion had many polytheistic elements: personifications of nature, masters of animals, ancestral spirits, and mythological figures. It was in the ancient agricultural societies such as those of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, or northern Europe, however, that polytheistic pantheons (all the gods of a religion) became most highly “developed.” The unification of many peoples into empires typically meant that their various patronal gods had to be incorporated into a single system, and the increasing complexity of human society called for a heavenly counterpart with extensive division of labor.

Today, the great historical religions of monotheism and monism, as seen through Western conceptualization, have overwhelmed traditional forms of polytheism in most parts of the world. Shinto is perhaps the only thoroughgoing polytheistic religion remaining in a major advanced society. But Hinduism and Taoism retain polytheistic pantheons set against a monistic background. Even in Buddhism and the Western monotheisms, devotion to various buddhas, bodhisattvas, saints, angels, and spirits, especially on a popular level, often displays polytheistic characteristics, revealing a persistent human desire of deviation to find the sacred in finite, particularized forms as well as in the One.

208 Willam H. Gentz, *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion*, pp. 478–79.

209 Ibid.

210 Ibid.

211 Ibid.

212 Ibid.

213 Ibid.

214 Ibid.

215 Philip W. Goetz (editor-in-chief), *The New Encyclopædia Britannica, Volume 6, Fifteenth Edition*. (Chicago, Illinois, USA: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 1985), p. 242.

216 Ibid.

217 Ibid.

218 Ibid.

219 Geoffrey Barraclough et al. (editors), *HarperCollins Atlas of World History*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA: Border Press in association with HarperCollins, 2001), pp. 256–75.

220 Ibid.

221 Ibid.

222 Ibid.

Sun Yat-sen or **Sun Yixian** (1866–1925) – originally Sun Wen, founder and early leader of China’s Nationalist Party, born in Xiangshan, Guangdong province. He studied in Hawaii and in Hong Kong, where he trained as a doctor. Alarmed by the weakness and decay of China, he founded the Alliance Society (1905), and sprang to fame when, on a visit to London, he was kidnapped by the Chinese legation, and released through the intervention of the British Foreign Office. He then helped to organize risings in southern China. He returned to China after the 1911 Wuhan rising, realized that he would not be widely acceptable as president, and voluntarily handed over the office to Yuan Shikai. In 1912, he founded the Guomindang, based on his *Three People’s Principles* of nationalism, democracy, and economic reform. Civil war ensued (1913), and he set up a separate government at Guangzhou (Canton). At his death he was widely accepted as the true leader of the nation.



Yuan Shikai or **Yuan Shih-k'ai** (1859–1916) – Chinese statesman and soldier, born in Ziancheng, Henan, China. He was careful to remain neutral during the Boxer Rebellion, from which he thus emerged with his army intact and with the gratitude of the foreign powers. On the death of his patron, the Empress Dowager Cixi (1908), he was removed from influence, but recalled after the successful Wuhan Nationalist rising (1911). As president of the new republic (1912), he lost support by procuring the murder of the parliamentary leader of the Nationalists and making war on them, accepting Japan’s *Twenty-One Demands* of 1915, and proclaiming himself emperor (1915). He was forced to abdicate.



223 Geoffrey Barraclough, *HarperCollins Atlas of World History*, pp. 256–75.

224 *Ibid.*

225 *Ibid.*

226 **Brexit** – abbreviation for “**British exit**,” which refers to the June 23, 2016, referendum whereby British citizens voted to exit the European Union (EU). The referendum roiled global markets, including currencies, causing the British pound to fall to its lowest level in decades. Then Prime Minister David Cameron, who supported the United Kingdom (UK) remaining in the EU, resigned on July 13, 2016 as a result. Home Secretary Theresa May, leader of the Conservative Party, became Prime Minister.

Supporters of Brexit based their view on a variety of factors, from the global competitiveness of British businesses to the European debt crisis to concerns about immigration. Britain had already opted out of the EU’s monetary union — meaning that it uses the pound instead of the euro — and the Schengen Area, meaning that it does not share open borders with a number of other European nations. Brexit campaigners argued that the Brussels’ bureaucracy (headquarters of the EU) had slowed down the British economy and that EU laws and regulations were a threat to British sovereignty.

After Brexit, worry over the future of the EU swept across the continent. Right-wing nationalist movements in Europe saw the Brexit vote as a win, and started calling for national referendums in other EU member countries. France is seen as the first in line for a so-called Frexit. The French National Front (FN) party, lead by the immigrant-demonizing and anti-EU politician, Marine Le Pen, hailed the Brexit vote as a win for nationalism and sovereignty across Europe. “Like a lot of French people, I’m very happy that the British people held on and made the right choice. What we thought was impossible yesterday has now become possible,” Le Pen said. She has vowed, if elected French president, an EU referendum for France will take place within six months of her inauguration.

Italy might have the biggest support amongst voters when it comes to a potential exit from the EU. Hours after the Brexit result, Italy’s head of the Northern League, Matteo Salvini, reiterated his stance that it was time for Italy to give the people a voice. “This vote was a slap in the face for all those who say that Europe is their own business and Italians don’t have to meddle with that,” Salvini said. The Northern League has an ally in the five-star movement. Virginia Raggi, who was elected mayor of Rome, is a campaigner for the anti-establishment movement and has also called for an Italian referendum on its EU membership.

Greece’s departure, or Grexit, was coined long before Brexit. Interestingly, the Greeks have voted to leave the EU in the past — specifically, July

2015 — and the measure failed, with only 39% voting to leave. This meant that Greece was forced to restructure debt and accept continued austerity. While Greece might be seen as a likely contender now — Brexit could give anti-austerity parties in Greece and their supporters enough momentum to succeed in a new referendum — its close financial ties to the EU make a departure much more difficult. Greece currently owes 32 billion euros to the IMF and 20 billion euros to the European Central Bank.

Scotland, which voted for independence from the UK in 2014 and lost, voted overwhelmingly in favor of the UK staying in the EU. As a result, some of its leaders started calling for a second referendum on Scottish independence. If Scotland did leave the UK, it would likely rejoin the EU (source: <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brexit.asp>).

227 Geoffrey Barraclough, *HarperCollins Atlas of World History*, pp. 256–75.

228 Ibid.

229 Ibid.

230 Ibid.

231 Ibid.

232 Ibid.

233 Ibid.

234 Ibid.

The war left Europe in 1945 not only politically disorganized but also in a state of economic prostration, greatly exacerbated by large-scale population movements. In 1946, pig iron output in Western Europe was just over 19 million tons, less than half the 1939 volume; in France, Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries (Belgium, Luxemburg, and the Netherlands), output was less than 10 million tons, less than one-third the 1939 volume.^a Western European crude steel production in 1946 was under 10 million tons as compared with 490 million tons in 1939. Agriculture suffered even more severely than manufacturing, and the breakdown of the communications network (especially railways) was crippling. Until 1949, the outlook was bleak, and political uncertainty, fostered by the antagonism between the US and the USSR, hampered recovery.

- a **pig iron** – iron tapped from a blast furnace and cast into pigs (beds of sand) in preparation for conversion into steel, cast iron (a hard, relatively brittle alloy of iron and carbon that can be readily cast in a mold and contains a higher proportion of carbon than steel, typically 2.0–4.3%), or wrought iron (a tough, malleable form of iron suitable for forging or rolling rather than casting, obtained by puddling pig iron while molten).

235 **Abū Jahl** (circa 68BH/556CE–2AH/624CE) – literally *father of ignorance*; the name given by the Prophet (ﷺ) to ‘Amr ibn Hishām, known in *jāhiliyah* as Abū al-Ḥakam (father of wisdom). A prominent enemy of Islam among the Quraysh, his hostility earned him the appellation of Abū Jahl. He was killed in the Battle of Badr in the year 2AH.

Abū Lahab (circa 75BH/549CE–2AH/624CE) – literally *father of flame*, his real name was ‘Abd al-‘Uzzá. Although he was an uncle of the Prophet (ﷺ), he was, nevertheless, a violent enemy of Islam. Before the Prophet’s mission, however, Abū Lahab’s sons, ‘Utbaḥ and ‘Utaibaḥ, had married the Prophet’s (ﷺ) daughters, Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthūm. With the advent of Islam, these marriages were annulled because neither son became a Muslim.

At the death of Abū Ṭālib, Abū Lahab became the head of the Banū Hāshim clan and withdrew clan protection from the Prophet (ﷺ), thus precipitating the Hijrah — the Prophet’s journey for freedom and refuge to Madinah. Abū Lahab died shortly after the Battle of Badr.

236 Washington Times staff writers, *‘Inside the Ring*. (Washington, DC: The Washington Times, Opinion section, November 9, 2006).
<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2006/nov/9/20061109-114639-6418r/>

237 David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia*, p. 891.

Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609) – Dutch Reformed theologian and professor of theology at the University of Leiden. He is most noted for his departure from the Reformed theology of the Belgic Confession resulting in what became the Calvinist-Arminian controversy addressed at the Synod of Dort (1618–1619). Arminius is best known as the founder of the anti-Calvinistic school in Protestant theology that bears his name — Arminianism. In attempting to defend Calvinistic predestination against the onslaughts of Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert, Arminius began to doubt and changed his own view. The theology of Arminianism was not fully



developed during Arminius' time, but was systematized after his death and formalized in the *Five Articles of Remonstrance* in 1610. The works of Arminius (in Latin) were published at Leiden in 1629, and at Frankfort in 1631 and 1635. After his death, at the Synod of Dort, his teaching was condemned by the state church. Later, however, Arminianism received official "toleration" by the state and has since continued in various forms within Protestantism (source: <http://www.theopedia.com/jacobus-arminius>).

Arminianism – school of theology based on the teachings of Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius, for whom it is named. It is perhaps most prominent in the Methodist movement and found in various other evangelical circles today. It stands in contrast to Calvinism, with which it has a long history of debate. Arminians as well as Calvinists appeal to various scriptures and the early church fathers to support their respective views, however differences remain — particularly as related to the sovereignty of God in salvation and the ideas of election and predestination.

The Arminians suggested five anti-Calvinist corrections, articulated in the *Five Articles of Remonstrance* (1610), which gave rise to the historic controversy and are summarized as follows:

1. **Universal Preventive Grace** – this grace purportedly restores man's free will that was impaired by the effects of original sin and enables him to choose or refuse the salvation offered by God in Jesus Christ (ﷺ).^a Some would say that freedom of will is man's natural state, not a spiritual gift — and thus free will was not lost in the Fall, but cannot be exercised toward good apart from the grace of God. In either case, God's universal preventive grace works upon all alike to influence them for good, but only those who freely choose to cooperate with grace through faith and repentance are given new spiritual power to make effectual the good they otherwise impotently intend. As John Wesley stated more forcefully, humans were in fact totally corrupted by original sin, but God's preventive grace allowed free will to operate. Universal preventive grace is the "hair's breadth" that separates Wesley from the Calvinist view of total depravity.
2. **Conditional Election** – this point holds that man is the final arbiter of his election, and that God elects him on the basis of foreseen faith that is exercised by libertarian free will, thus making man ultimately decisive.

God has decreed to save through Jesus Christ (ﷺ), out of fallen and sinful mankind, those foreknown by Him who through the grace of the Holy Spirit believe in Christ; but God leaves in sin those foreseen, who are incorrigible and unbelieving. This is in contrast to the Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election.
3. **Unlimited (or Universal) Atonement** – Christ's death was suffered on behalf of all men and benefits all men alike. God then elects for

salvation those whom he foresees will believe in Christ of their own free will. This is in contrast to the Calvinist doctrine of Limited atonement.

Arminians believe that whatever the atonement accomplished, it did so universally for all alike, not just the elect. This point rejects that the atonement has any component that is decisive or effectual in gathering of the elect. Rather, the atonement is seen as a universally effective propitiation and the basis for a universal offer of salvation. The key verse used for this position is 1 John, 2:2.

4. **Resistible Grace** – this point holds that God never overcomes the resistance of man to His saving grace. While both Calvinists and Arminians hold that men often resist God’s grace, Arminianism teaches that this resistance is rarely conquered by God because this would be a violation of man’s libertarian free will. The grace of God works for good in all men, and brings about newness of life through faith. But saving grace can be resisted, even by the regenerate. This is in contrast to the Calvinist doctrine of Irresistible grace.
5. **Uncertainty of Perseverance** – those who are incorporated into Christ by a true faith have power given to them through the assisting grace of the Holy Spirit, sufficient to enable them to persevere in the faith. However, it may be possible for a believer to fall from grace. This is in contrast to the Calvinist’s Perseverance of the saints. Not all Arminians have historically embraced this fifth point as stated. Some have embraced a form of eternal security that does not require perseverance in the faith and an attitude of repentance for final salvation. The majority of Arminians, regardless of their position on this point, still affirm that man retains libertarian free will throughout the entirety of earthly life.
 - a **libertarian free will** – a key tenet of Arminianism, this means that man’s choices are free from the determination or constraints of human nature and free from any predetermination by God. All “free will theists” hold that libertarian freedom is essential for moral responsibility, for if man’s choice is determined or caused by anything, including his own desires, they reason, it cannot properly be called a free choice. Refer also to **Endnote 421** in Volume 7 (source: <http://www.theopedia.com/arminianism>).

238 David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia*, p. 438.

239 Ibid., pp. 338, 410.

240 Wendy Doniger et al. (editors), *Merriam-Webster’s Encyclopedia of World Religions*. (Springfield, Massachusetts, USA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1999), p. 359.

241 Ibid., p. 882.

242 Ibid.

Jansenism – in Roman Catholicism, a religious movement that appeared chiefly in France, the Low Countries, and Italy in the 17th and 18th centuries. It arose out of the theological problem of reconciling divine grace and human freedom. In France it became connected with the struggle against the papacy by proponents of Gallicanism — a political theory advocating the restriction of papal power — and with opposition to the monarchical absolutism of Armand-Jean du Plessis Cardinal de Richelieu and Louis XIV.

The chief initiator of the movement was **Cornelius Otto Jansen** (1585–1638), a theologian at the University of Leuven (Louvain) and later Bishop of Ypres. Jansen’s views were published posthumously in 1640 in his *Augustinus*, a vast treatise defending the theology of St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430CE) and attacking certain teachings and practices associated especially with the Jesuit order. Jansen and his followers claimed that in their opposition to the doctrines of grace defined by Martin Luther (1483–1546) and John Calvin (1509–1564), the theologians of the Counter-Reformation had erred in the other direction, emphasizing human responsibility at the expense of the divine initiative and thus relapsing into the 5th-century heresy of Pelagianism — the teaching that humanity is essentially good and can attain salvation without divine aid.



Jansenism was a complex movement based more on a certain mentality and spirituality than on specific doctrines. It was an attempt, in line with that of the Reformation theologians, to reform the Church in the spirit of early Christianity. It opposed what, in its view, was a compromising approach to true Christian theology and practice but was rejected by the Church as an exaggerated and unorthodox position (source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/jansenism>).

243 Dr. Geoffrey Wigoder, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 326.

244 Ibid.

Moses Maimonides (1138–1204) – originally called Mūsá ibn Maymūn; Jewish philosopher, born in Cordoba, Spain (then under Islamic rule). He eventually settled in Cairo (circa 1165) where he became physician to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī and head of the Jewish community. He wrote a Hebrew commentary on the Mishnah, but his other main writings are in Arabic, the most important



being the *Guide to the Perplexed* (1190), which tries to harmonize the thought of Aristotle and Judaism. He was an influence on a range of philosophers and traditions, and was also the author of one of the most important codes of Jewish law. Refer also to **Endnote 101** in Volume 6.

245 Dr. Geoffrey Wigoder, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 344.

Saadiyah Gaon (882–942CE) – foremost Jewish medieval spiritual leader, Talmudist, biblical exegete, and philosopher. Born in Egypt, he lived for a time in Tiberias, after which he was appointed by the exilarch (head of the Jewish community in Babylon), David Ben Zakkai, to be the head of the college at Sura in Babylon, hence the title, Saadiyah Gaon. Saadiyah's fame rests on his philosophical work, *Emunot De-ot* (*Beliefs and Opinions*), written in Arabic and translated into Hebrew by Judah ibn Tibbon. This work is the first systematic Jewish theology. It is a philosophical defense of rabbinic Judaism by the leading representative of the Judaism practiced in that day. Among the many ideas of Saadiyah discussed at length by later Jewish thinkers are: his rejection of the doctrine of reincarnation as foreign to Judaism, and his belief that the world was created for human benefit. In the latter, he disagrees with Maimonides who holds that God's will and purpose are unknown (source: <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/saadiyah-gaon/>).

Judah Ha-Levi (died 1141) – medieval Jewish poet and philosopher. Ha-Levi's poems, secular and religious, are recognized as belonging to the foremost examples of Hebrew poetry. His *Songs of Zion*, giving expression to the poets yearning for the land of Israel, are still used in synagogues during the Ninth of Av service to introduce a note of consolation after the recital of the dirges on this day of mourning for the destruction of the Temple and for other calamities of the Jewish past. Obedient to the call of the Holy Land, Ha-Levi, at the age of 60, resolved to leave Spain in order to settle in the country of his dreams. On his way there, he stayed in Egypt, where he died.



In addition to his poems, Ha-Levi is renowned for his very influential philosophical treatise, the *Kuzari*, originally written in Arabic but later translated into Hebrew. Halevi structured this work around the accounts of a heathen tribe, the Khazars, whose king and people converted to Judaism; the *Kuzari* consists of a dialogue between a Jewish sage and the king of the Khazars. The book opens with a dream in which the king is told that while his intentions are admirable his deeds fall short of what God demands of him. Perturbed by the dream, the king first consults a philosopher but the latter tells him that God is so far above all human thought that He can be

concerned neither with the king's intentions nor with his deeds. The king receives a similar dusty answer when he consults a Christian and then a Muslim sage. In despair, the king consults the Jew who then embarks on a reasoned defense of Judaism. The *Kuzari* is thus a work of Jewish apologetics, a defense of the Jewish religion against the challenges of Greek philosophy, Christianity, and Islam from without, and against those presented by the Karaites (a member of a Jewish sect founded in the 8th century and located chiefly in the Crimea and nearby areas, and in Israel, that rejects rabbinical interpretation in favor of a literal interpretation of the scriptures) from within (source: <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/judah-halevi/>).

Hasdai Crescas (died 1412) – philosopher and communal leader of the Aragonian Jewish communities; one of the most influential personalities of Spanish Jewry, in particular for his efforts in preventing Jews from being lured away from Judaism in the wake of Christian persecution, which claimed the life of his own son in 1391. Crescas devoted a good deal of his literary endeavors both to defending Judaism against theological attacks by Christians and to offering a critique of the popular philosophical trends. His work in Spanish (later translated into Hebrew), *Refutation of the Principle Dogmas of the Christian Religion*, came to occupy a prominent place in the literature of Jewish-Christian polemics. Crescas' major work, on which his fame as a philosopher rests, is his *Or Adonai (Light of the Lord)* in which he takes issue with the dominant Aristotelian philosophy and Maimonides' reliance on this for the interpretation of Judaism.

Medieval philosophers grappled with the problem of reconciling divine foreknowledge with human free will. Crescas, anxious not to qualify in any way the doctrine of divine foreknowledge, puts forward a deterministic view. According to him, man is not fated to act in the way he does. He does have the freedom of choice. But the exercise of this freedom of choice is determined by God's foreknowledge. God knows how man will choose. Man's choice is guided by the promise of a reward for doing good and the threat of punishment for doing evil. Thus, what is determined by God's foreknowledge is the whole process by means of which man arrives at his particular choices. There would be no justice in God granting reward to the righteous and punishing the wicked if rewards were in the nature of gifts for virtuous living and punishments were deprivations for evil living. Rewards and punishments are only the means by which a man is spurred on to choose to lead a virtuous life and to reject a vicious life, and they operate as cause and effect (source: <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/hasdai-crescas/>).

246 Cyril Glassé, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*. (San Francisco, California: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1989), pp. 282–83.

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh (died 709AH/1309CE) – a mystic of the order founded by the Imam al-Shādhilī (died 656AH/1258CE). Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh was originally a jurist of the Mālikī School of Law and taught at al-Azhar school in Cairo, and at the Maṣūriyāh. His father had been a Sufi but not only was Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh not drawn to mysticism, he was antagonistic toward it, and in particular toward Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī (died 686AH/1288CE), who taught Sufi disciples in Alexandria. But in 674AH, Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh met al-Mursī, successor to Imam al-Shādhilī, and became his disciple on the spot.

Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh wrote a celebrated book of mystical aphorisms (short, pithy, instructive sayings), *Kitāb al-Ḥikam* (*Book of Wisdom*), which aimed at arousing spiritual awareness in the disciple. He also wrote *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ wa-Miṣbāḥ al-Arwāḥ* (*The Key of Success and the Lamp of Spirits*) on the spiritual method of invocation (*dhikr*), *Kitāb al-Tanwīr fī Isqāṭ al-Tadbīr* (*Light on the Illumination of Self-Direction*) concerning the approach of the Shādhilī school to the practice of virtue, *Kitāb al-Laṭā’if fī Manāqib Abī al-‘Abbās al-Mursī wa-Shaykhihi Abī al-Ḥasan* (*The Subtleties Pertaining to Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī’s and His Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan’s Outlandish Traits*) about the first masters of the Shādhilīyāh *ṭarīqah*, and other works. The intellectual mysticism of Imam al-Shādhilī, as well as that of Ibn ‘Arabī, made a deep impression upon the Muslims of Indonesia, where the works of Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh are well known, in particular his *Kitāb al-Ḥikam*, which has been translated into Malay. Some of his aphorisms include the following:

One of the signs of relying on one’s own deeds is the loss of hope when a downfall occurs.

Your striving for what has already been guaranteed to you, and your remissness in what is demanded of you, are signs of the blurring of your intellect.

If He opens a door for you, thereby making Himself known, pay no heed if your deeds do not measure up to this. For, in truth, He has not opened it for you but out of a desire to make Himself known to you. Do you not know that He is the one who presented the knowledge of Himself to you, whereas you are the one who presented Him with deeds? What a difference between what He brings to you and what you bring to Him.

How can the heart be illumined while the forms of creatures are reflected in its mirror? Or how can it journey to Allah while shackled by its passions? Or how can it desire to enter the Presence of Allah while it has not yet purified itself of the stain of its forgetfulness? Or

how can it understand the subtle points of mysteries while it has not yet repented of its offenses?

How can it be conceived that something veils Him, since He is the one who manifests everything?

Your postponement of deeds till the time when you are free is one of the frivolities of the ego.

He who is illumined at the beginning is illumined at the end.

Your being on the lookout for the vices hidden within you is better than your being on the lookout for the invisible realities veiled from you.

One of the signs of delusion is sadness over the loss of obedience coupled with the absence of resolve to bring it back to life.

The proof that you have not found Him is that you strive for the permanency of what is other than He, and the proof that you are not united to Him is that you feel estranged at the loss of what is other than He.

Travel not from creature to creature, otherwise you will be like a donkey at the mill: roundabout he turns, his goal the same as his departure. Rather go from creatures to Creator, **“And that the final end is unto Your Lord” (53:42)**. Consider the Prophet’s (ﷺ) words, *“Therefore, he whose flight is for Allah and His Messenger, then his flight is for Allah and His Messenger; and he whose flight is for worldly gain or marriage of a woman, then his flight is for that which he flees to.”*^a So understand his (ﷺ) words and ponder this matter, if you can. And peace on you.

- a Narrated by ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and recorded in all the major books of the Hadith, including al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى . فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ . فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ . وَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى دُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا . أَوْ امْرَأَةٍ يَنْكِحُهَا . فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ .

247 Cyril Glassé, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*. (San Francisco, California: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1989), pp. 245–47.

248 Ibid., p. 366.

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī (605–672AH/1207–1273CE) – one of the greatest mystics of Islam. There are, nevertheless, salient elements of unorthodoxy in his teachings; he believed in metempsychosis — which is a belief that orthodox doctrine must reject or reduce to a metaphor (that is, to refrain from relying on simplistic literalist interpretations) — and his universalism went far enough to be questionable. However, the effect of tradition has been to disregard these and integrate him into the mainstream. He was of Persian origin from Balkh, but left at an early age with his father Bahā' al-Dīn Walad, a scholar who had a disagreement with the rulers. After several years of wandering, the family was invited by the Seljuk sultan of Rūm to settle in Iconium (now Konya), Turkey. To demonstrate his respect for Bahā' al-Dīn, the sultan went to the outskirts of the city to receive the scholar as he approached Konya, dismounted from his horse, and led Bahā' al-Dīn's mount by the hand into the city. Because of the Byzantine past of the region, it retained the name *Rūm* (*Rome*) among the Turks; and it is from this that Jalāl al-Dīn came to be known as al-Rūmī, “the man of Rome (Byzantium).”



It is said that while he was in Damascus in 618AH (1221CE), Jalāl al-Dīn had been seen walking behind his father by Ibn 'Arabī, the great exponent of Sufi doctrine, who had exclaimed, “Praise be to Allah, an ocean is following a lake!” In Konya, Jalāl al-Dīn became a religious teacher, and he was already a Sufi when, at the age of 39, he met Shams al-Dīn al-Tabrīzī (died 645AH/1247CE), a mysterious figure, who was to exert the most powerful effect upon the poet and to vivify, like a veritable sun, the growth of his latent spiritual and literary genius. Jalāl al-Dīn later wrote of him, “Sun of Tabriz... the absolute light... the sun [*shams* in Arabic] and the ray of the lights of Divine Truth.”

Shams al-Dīn al-Tabrīzī, considered to be one of the spiritual poles (*aqṭāb*) of his age, transformed al-Rūmī, and brought him to taste direct knowledge. The *Mathnawī*, a vast six-volume work of spiritual teaching and Sufi lore in the form of stories and lyric poetry of excellent quality, was one of the outward results of al-Rūmī's discipleship of Shams al-Dīn al-Tabrīzī, to whom he dedicated much of his work. The *Mathnawī* stands as one of the treasures of the Persian-speaking world, known to all speakers of the language and memorized in part by every literate member of Persian society. The inward realization called forth by Shams al-Dīn gave al-Rūmī the force that lives in the dervish order of the Mevlevi (Mawlawī in Arabic), which he founded and whose center is in Konya.

At one point, it is related, Shams al-Dīn disappeared from Konya and al-Rūmī sent men to look for him. Two years later, he was either found or simply reappeared in Konya; after a further sojourn in the home of al-Rūmī he was murdered by persons jealous of him. By that time, however, his dis-

appearances and mysterious reappearances, and his strange nature may well have been blended into an allegory created by al-Rūmī to symbolize the dawning or unveiling of the spirit, the reflection of Being within the soul.

The Mevlevi order founded by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī is also known as the “Whirling Dervishes” for their dancing and music (*samāʿ*), both of which are considered necessary for their spiritual method. Apart from the dancing and music of the Mevlevi order, al-Rūmī is associated with music in other ways, for the singing of the *Mathnawī* has become an art form in and of itself.

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī came to be a powerful spiritual influence not only in the Persian-speaking world, including Afghanistan and Central Asia, but also among the Turks, and in India. Sage and poet, his tomb in Konya is a major destination for the pious and the searching. For eight centuries, he has been a living presence for his followers, many of whom experience his *barakah* (grace) directly as if he were still with them. Among the many famous quotations from Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī are,

Every form you see has its archetype [original] in the Divine world, beyond space; if the form perishes, [then] what matter, since its heavenly model is indestructible? Every beautiful form you have seen, every meaningful word you have heard — be not sorrowful because all this must be lost; such is not really the case. The Divine Source is immortal and its outflowing gives water without cease; since neither the one nor the other can be stopped, wherefore do you lament? ...From the moment you came into the world a ladder was put before you that you could escape. First you were mineral; then you became a plant; then you became an animal. Did you not know that? Then you were made man, given consciousness, knowledge and faith. Think on this body made from dust — what perfection it has! When you have transcended the condition of man you will doubtless become an angel. Then you will have finished with the earth: your home will be heaven. Go beyond the angelic state; go into that ocean so that your drop of water will become one with the sea.

Appear as you are, be as you appear. You are not this body, but a spiritual eye — what the eye of man contemplates it becomes...

Tell me Muslims, what should be done? I don't know how to identify myself. I am neither Christian nor Jewish, neither Pagan nor Muslim. I don't hail from the East or from the West. I am neither from land nor sea. I am not a creature of this world...

249 **William Blake** (1757–1827) – English engraver, artist, poet, and visionary, author of exquisite lyrics in *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794), and of profound and difficult “prophecies,” such as *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), *The First Book of Urizen* (1794), *Milton* (1804–1811), and *Jerusalem* (1804–1820). These works he etched, printed, colored, stitched, and sold, with the assistance of his devoted wife, Catherine. Among his best known lyrics today are “The Lamb,” “The Tyger,” “London,” and the “Jerusalem” lyric from *Milton*, which has become a kind of second national anthem in Britain. In the early-21st century, Blake was regarded as the earliest and most original of the Romantic poets, but in his lifetime he was generally neglected or (unjustly) dismissed as mad.



However, not a half century after his death, Blake began to be considered as a major figure in English poetry and art, especially after Alexander Gilchrist’s two-volume *Life of William Blake*, “*Pictor Ignotus*” (1863). Blake’s appeal is now worldwide, and it is not just his poetry that has attracted international attention. Since 1927, there have been major exhibitions of Blake’s art in major Western capitals and cities. Blake has come to be regarded as a major poet, as one of the most fascinating British artists, as an original thinker, and as a conundrum of endless fascination.

Blake’s influence has been traced in the works of authors as diverse as Yeats, Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw, D.H. Lawrence, Welsh poet Dylan Thomas, and American writer and monk Thomas Merton. Blake, who set his own poems to music and died singing them, has had an impact on the world of music as well. His works have been set as operas, and he has served as inspiration for an enormous number of musical composers, including Hubert Parry and pop musicians (source: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Blake>).

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892–1973) – major scholar of the English language, specializing in Old and Middle English. Professor of Old English at the University of Oxford, he also wrote a number of stories, including most famously *The Hobbit* (1937) and the trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955), that are set in a pre-historic era in a fictional version of the world, which he called by the Middle English name, *Middle-earth*. This world was populated by men, elves, dwarves, trolls, orcs (or goblins), and of course, hobbits.



In addition to *The Lord of the Rings*, between 1925 and his death, Tolkien wrote a number of other articles, including a range of scholarly essays, many reprinted posthumously in *The Monsters and the Critics and*

Other Essays (1983), and one Middle-earth related work, *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* (1962). Other works, also edited and published posthumously by his son, Christopher, include *The Silmarillion* (1977) and *Unfinished Tales of Númenor* (1980), the author's incomplete writings from his later years (source: <https://www.tolkiensociety.org/author/biography/>).

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) – considered one of the greatest poets of the 20th century; born in Dublin, Ireland to the well-known Irish painter, John Butler Yeats. Born into the Anglo-Irish landowning class, Yeats became involved with the Celtic Revival, a movement against the cultural influences of English rule in Ireland during the Victorian period, which sought to promote the spirit of Ireland's native heritage. Though Yeats never learned Gaelic himself, his writing at the turn of the century drew extensively from sources in Irish mythology and folklore. Also a potent influence on his poetry was the Irish revolutionary Maud Gonne, whom he met in 1889, a woman equally famous for her passionate nationalist politics and her beauty.



Yeats was deeply involved in politics in Ireland, and in the 1920s, despite Irish independence from England, his verse reflected a pessimism about the political situation in his country and the rest of Europe, paralleling the increasing conservatism of his American counterparts in London, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. His work after 1910 was strongly influenced by Pound, becoming more modern in its conciseness and imagery. He had a life-long interest in mysticism and the occult, which was off-putting to some readers, but he remained uninhibited in advancing his idiosyncratic philosophy, and his poetry continued to grow stronger as he grew older. Appointed a senator of the Irish Free State in 1922, he is remembered as an important cultural leader, as a major playwright, and as one of the very greatest poets — in any language — of the century. Yeats was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1923 (source: <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/w-b-yeats>).

structuralism – the various theories across the humanities, social sciences, and economics that are based on the assumption that structural relationships between concepts vary between different cultures/languages and that these relationships can be usefully exposed and explored. It represents an approach in academic disciplines in general that explores the relationships between fundamental principal elements in language, literature, and other fields upon which some higher mental, linguistic, social, or cultural “structures” and “structural networks” are built. Through these networks, meaning is produced within a particular person, system, or culture. This meaning then frames and motivates the actions of individuals and groups. Structuralism

appeared in academia for the first time in the 19th century and then reappeared in the second half of the 20th century, when it grew to become one of the most popular approaches in academic fields concerned with the analysis of language, culture, and society (source: <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Structuralism>).

folklorism – the study of folklore, that is, the traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community, passed through the generations by word of mouth; or a body of popular myth and beliefs relating to a particular place, activity, or group of people.

250 Muḥammad Abū Zuhrah, *Khātam al-Nabiyyin (The Final of the Prophets), Volume 1*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, year of publication unspecified), p. 378–79.

Quraysh – the power elite of Makkah. The name comes from the root word *qarasha* meaning to *bite*, another derivative of which is the word for *shark*, “the biting fish” (*qarsh*), sometimes thought to be the “totem” of the tribe. Possibly Quraysh, which is a diminutive form meaning *little shark*, was the nickname of Fihr, the ancestor of the tribe, whose other name was al-Naḍr. The tribe was settled in Makkah by an ancestor of renown called Quṣayy who displaced the previous inhabitants, the Khuḏā‘ah. The clans who lived in the immediate vicinity of the Ka‘bah, in the lowest part of Makkah (al-Baṭḥā’), were known as Abṭahī or Biṭāhī, or as Quraysh al-Biṭāh (the “Quraysh of the Hollow”). Less illustrious families, who lived farther out, were known as Quraysh al-Zawāhir (the “Quraysh of the Outskirts”).

The location of Makkah on important caravan routes across the Arabian Peninsula, and the prestige of the Ka‘bah in the pre-Islamic *jāhiliyah* (ignocracy) gave Makkah a considerable advantage as a trading city, with the result that Quraysh became one of the richest and most powerful residents of Makkah. This, together with their descent from the Kinānah and Ismā‘īl (ﷺ), gave them claims to an aristocratic preeminence.

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) hailed from the Banū Hāshim clan of Quraysh, and each of the four *khalīfahs*, as well as many of the Arabian kings who followed them, were from the Quraysh. Indeed, one particular hadith has been taken to mean that rulership and *khalīfah* are a prerogative of this power elite alone. The Quraysh is mentioned by name in the Qur’an,

Due to Quraysh’s familiarity — their familiarity with the winter and summer [commercial] journey — they should, therefore, conform to the Lord of this [consecrated] Temple, who has given them food in the aftermath of hunger and given them security in the aftermath of anxiety (106:1–4).

According to a Sufi interpretation, this could refer to the soul’s vicissitudes and to the protection afforded by Allah (ﷻ) to the noblest elements in the soul in its spiritual economy. Refer also to **Endnote 257** in Volume 7.

- 251 Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, *Ḥayāh Muḥammad (The Life of Muhammad)*. (Qum, Iran: Dār al-Hudá, 1428AH), pp. 242–43 (originally narrated by Ibn Ishāq via Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī).

Abū Sufyān – the prominent and wealthy Makkan merchant who led the opposition to the Prophet (ﷺ) and conducted some of the military campaigns against him. His wife, Hind, was also numbered among the fiercest opponents of Islam, and she and Abū Sufyān were among the last to accept Islam when Makkah was finally liberated by the Muslims. Historically, it was the descendants of Abū Sufyān who constituted the first dynasty, the Umayyads, to rule over the Islamic domain after the death of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) fourth successor, Imam ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Refer also to **Endnote 345** in Volume 5, **Endnote 382** in Volume 7, and **Endnote 400** in Volume 10.

252 Ibid.

- 253 Wendy Doniger et al., *Merriam-Webster’s Encyclopedia of World Religions*, p. 925.

254 Ibid.

255 Ibid., pp. 768–69.

256 Ibid.

Zen Buddhism – a school of Mahayana Buddhism that originated in China during the Tang dynasty as Chan Buddhism. It was strongly influenced by Taoism and developed as a distinguished school of Chinese Buddhism. From China, Chan Buddhism spread south to Vietnam, northeast to Korea and east to Japan, where it became known as Japanese Zen.

Zen emphasizes rigorous self-control, meditation-practice, insight into Buddha-nature, and the personal expression of this insight in daily life, especially for the benefit of others. As such, it de-emphasizes mere knowledge of *sutras* (Buddhist scriptures) and doctrine, favoring instead direct understanding through *zazen* (meditation, usually in the lotus position) and interaction with an accomplished teacher (source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zen>).



257 Wendy Doniger et al., *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of World Religions*, pp. 768–69.

St. Francis of Assisi (1181–1226) – Christian theologian and founder of the Franciscan Order or “Friars Minor.” His early years were frivolous, but an experience of sickness and another of military service were instrumental in leading him to reflect on the purpose of life. One day, in the church of San Damiano, he seemed to hear Christ saying to him, “Francis, repair my falling house.”



In 1219, St. Francis went to the Holy Land to preach to the Muslims. He was given a pass through the enemy lines, and spoke to Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil (1177–1238). St. Francis is said to have proclaimed the Gospel to the sultan, who replied that he had his own beliefs, and that the Muslims were as firmly convinced of the truth of Islam as Francis was of the truth of Christianity. St. Francis proposed that a fire be built, and that he and a Muslim volunteer would walk side by side into the fire to show whose faith was stronger. The sultan said he was not sure that a Muslim volunteer could be found. St. Francis then offered to walk into the fire alone. The sultan was deeply impressed but remained unconverted. St. Francis proposed an armistice between the two warring sides, and drew up terms; the sultan agreed, but, to St. Francis’ deep disappointment, the Christian leaders did not. St. Francis returned to Italy, but the sultan granted the Franciscans custody of the Christian shrines then in Muslim hands.

After St. Francis passed on, the Franciscans split into the Conventual Franciscans, who held a limited amount of property in common, and the Spiritual Franciscans, who disavowed all property. They taught that Christ and the 12 apostles had held no property, singly or jointly. This view offended those who held property, and was declared to be heretical. In 1318, several Spiritual Franciscans were burned at the stake in Marseilles, France (source: <https://www.theopedia.com/francis-of-assisi>).

St. Dominic (1170–1221) – Castilian priest and founder of the Dominican Order; patron saint of astronomers, the Dominican Republic, and the innocent who are falsely accused of crimes. He is commonly depicted in icons with a dog, or lilies, holding a book.



During the later part of his life, the Albigensian “heresy” was flourishing. Some Albigensians had been known to praise the suicide of their members, often by means of self-inflicted starvation; they also taught that all material things, including the human body itself, were fundamentally evil. These notions, considered to be heretical by the Catholic Church, invited delegations from

the pope to set things aright. A group of monks, an order of Benedictines who returned to an ancient Rule known as the Cistercians, were specifically assigned to combat the Albigensians, but they made little headway. However, when St. Dominic debated them, they could not defend themselves, and ended up threatening Dominic with violence. Despite these hazards, St. Dominic traveled throughout the region, preaching and converting many back to Catholic faith and practice. There is disagreement among historians over whether he was an inquisitor in the Medieval Inquisition; the Church categorically denies any such involvement (source: http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=178).

258 Wendy Doniger et al., *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of World Religions*, pp. 768–69.

259 Ibid.

260 Ibid.

261 **Martin Buber** (1878–1965) – Jewish theologian and philosopher, born in Vienna. He studied philosophy at Vienna, Berlin, and Zurich universities, then founded and edited *Der Jude* (*The Jew*) from 1916–1924. He was professor of comparative religion at Frankfurt (1923–1933), and then director of an institute for Jewish adult education until 1938. Later, he fled to Palestine to escape the Nazis and became professor of the sociology of religion at Jerusalem. His most influential work as a figure of religious existentialism was the early *Ich and Du* (*I and Thou*, 1923).



262 Wendy Doniger et al., *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of World Religions*, pp. 768–69.

263 **Bhagavadgita** or **Bhagavad Gita** – Sanskrit for *The Song of the Lord*, a poem forming part of the Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*, consisting of an eve of battle dialogue between the warrior prince Arjuna and Lord Krishna (in the person of his charioteer). Most Hindus regard the poem, with its teaching that there are many valid ways to salvation, but that not all are universally appropriate, as the supreme expression of their religion.

264 Wendy Doniger et al., *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of World Religions*, pp. 768–69.

Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) – refer to **Endnote 787** on p. 316.

265 Ibid.

266 Ibid.

267 Ibid.

Patanjali – not much is known about the life and times of this sage; some believe he lived around the second century BCE and also wrote significant works on Ayurveda (Indian system of medicine) and Sanskrit grammar. However, based on analyses of the language and the teaching of the *sutras*, modern scholars place Patanjali in the second or third century CE and ascribe the medical essays and grammar to various other “Patanjalis.”

Greek Mysteries – other than Judaism and Christianity, the mystery religions were the most influential religions in the early centuries after Christ. The reason these cults were called “mystery religions” is that they involved secret ceremonies known only to those initiated into the cult. The major benefit of these practices was thought to be some kind of salvation.

The mystery religions were not the only manifestations of the religious spirit in the eastern Roman Empire. One could also find public cults not requiring an initiation ceremony into secret beliefs and practices. The Greek Olympian religion and its Roman counterpart are examples of this type of religion. Each Mediterranean region produced its own mystery religion. Out of Greece came the cults of Demeter and Dionysus, as well as the Eleusinian and Orphic mystery religions, which developed later. Asia Minor gave birth to the cult of Cybele, the Great Mother, and her beloved, a shepherd named Attis. The cult of Isis and Osiris (later changed to Serapis) originated in Egypt, while Syria and Palestine saw the rise of the cult of Adonis. Finally, Persia (Iran) was a leading early locale for the cult of Mithras, which, due to its frequent use of the imagery of war, held a special appeal to Roman soldiers. The earlier Greek mystery religions were state religions in the sense that they attained the status of a public or civil cult and served a national or public function. The later non-Greek mysteries were personal, private, and individualistic.

There was no common mystery religion. While a tendency toward eclecticism (ancient philosophical paradigm that did not belong to any recognized school of thought, but selected such doctrines from various schools according to the wishes of its practitioners) or synthesis developed after 300CE, each of the mystery cults was a separate and distinct religion during the century that saw the birth of the Christian church. Moreover, each mystery cult assumed different forms in different cultural settings and underwent significant changes, especially after 100CE. Nevertheless, the mystery religions exhibited five common traits:

1. Central to each mystery was its use of an annual vegetation cycle in which life is renewed each spring and dies each fall. Followers of the mystery cults found deep symbolic significance in the natural processes of growth, death, decay, and rebirth.
2. Each cult made important use of secret ceremonies or mysteries, often in connection with an initiation rite. Each mystery religion also passed on a “secret” to the initiate that included information about the life of the cult’s god or goddess and how humans might achieve unity with that deity. This “knowledge” was always a secret or esoteric knowledge, unattainable by an “outsider.”
3. Each mystery also centered around a myth in which the deity either returned to life after death or else triumphed over its enemies. Implicit in the myth was the theme of redemption from everything earthly and temporal. The secret meaning of the cult and its accompanying myth was expressed in a “sacramental drama” that appealed largely to the feelings and emotions of the initiates. This religious ecstasy was supposed to lead them to think they were experiencing the beginning of a new life.
4. The mysteries had little or no use for doctrine and correct belief. They were primarily concerned with the emotional life of their followers. The cults used many different means to affect the emotions and imaginations of initiates and hence bring about “union with the god”: processions, fasting, a play, acts of purification, blazing lights, and esoteric liturgies. This lack of any emphasis on correct belief marked an important difference between the mysteries and Christianity. The Christian faith was exclusivistic in the sense that it recognized only one legitimate path to God and salvation, Jesus Christ. The mysteries were inclusivistic in the sense that nothing prevented a believer in one cult from following other mysteries.
5. The immediate goal of the initiates was a mystical experience that led them to feel they had achieved union with their god. Beyond this quest for mystical union were two more ultimate goals: some kind of redemption or salvation, and immortality (source: <http://www.equip.org/article/mystery-religion-what-were-the-mystery-religions/>).

268 Wendy Doniger et al., *Merriam-Webster’s Encyclopedia of World Religions*, pp. 768–69.

moksha – in Hinduism and Jainism, the transcendent state attained as a result of being released from the cycle of rebirth impelled by the law of *karma*; or the transcendent state attained as a result of being released from the cycle of rebirth.

269 Ibid.

nirvana – in Buddhism, a transcendent state in which there is neither suffering, desire, nor sense of self, and the subject is released from the effects of *karma* and the cycle of death and rebirth. It represents the final goal of Buddhism. Another term for *moksha*.

270 Ibid.

Kabbalah – refer to **Endnote 251** in Volume 7.

Sepher ha-Zohar – 13th-century book, mostly in Aramaic, that is the classic text of esoteric Jewish mysticism, or Kabbalah. Though Kabbalah was taught by Jews as early as the 1st century CE, the *Zohar* gave new life and impetus to mystical speculations through the 14th and subsequent centuries. Many Kabbalists, in fact, invested the *Zohar* with a sanctity that is normally accorded only to the Torah and the Talmud.

The *Zohar* consists of several units, the largest of which — usually called the *Zohar* proper — deals with the “inner” (mystical, symbolic) meaning of biblical texts, especially those taken from the Pentateuch (Torah), from the Book of Ruth, and from the Song of Solomon. The lengthy homilies of the *Zohar* are mixed with short discourses and parables, all centered on Simeon ben Yoḥai (2nd century CE) and his disciples. Though the text names Simeon as the author, modern scholars are convinced that the major portion of the *Zohar* should be credited to Moses de León (1250–1305) of Spain. They do not rule out the possibility, however, that earlier mystic materials were used or incorporated into the present text.

Because the mystery of creation is a recurrent theme in the *Zohar*, there are extensive discussions of the 10 divine emanations (*sephiroth*, literally *numbers*) of God the Creator, which reputedly explain the creation and continued existence of the universe. Other major topics are the problem of evil and the cosmic significance of prayer and good deeds. After their expulsion from Spain in 1492, the Jews were much taken up with thoughts of the Messiah and eschatology and turned to the *Zohar* as a guide for mystical speculations. The greatest influence of the *Zohar*, especially among ordinary Jews, did not occur, therefore, until several centuries after the book was composed (source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sefer-ha-zohar>).

271 Wendy Doniger et al., *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of World Religions*, pp. 768–69.

Desert Fathers – early Christian monks living in the Egyptian desert. Although they did not write as prolifically as the Apostolic and the Greek and Latin Fathers, their teachings had great influence. Among them are

Anthony the Great and Pachomius. A great number of their usually short sayings is collected in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.

- 272 **Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn ‘Abdillāh ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Ḥasanī wa-al-Ḥusaynī al-Shādhilī** (593AH/1196CE–656AH/1258CE) – influential North-African Islamic scholar and Sufi, founder of the Shādhilī Sufi Order. Imam Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī was born in Banī Yafraḥ in the region of Ghumara, near Tetouan, in northern Morocco. A descendent of the Prophet (ﷺ) through al-Imam al-Ḥasan, he was a brilliant Mālikī scholar famed for his skills in legal discourse. Yet his relationship with the renowned Sufi master ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh (died 603AH/1207CE) would orient Imam al-Shādhilī’s life toward the knowledge of the inner self and contemplation of the divine. After a vigorous period of spiritual apprenticeship and advancement, Imam al-Shādhilī would eventually inherit his master’s station and found the Shādhiliyah Order, spreading its teaching in North Africa and Egypt. One of the many signs of Imam al-Shādhilī’s rank is the great number of outstanding Sufis found amongst his disciples, including Sayyid Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī (died 686AH/1287CE), Shaykh Yāqūt al-‘Arsh (died 717AH/1317CE), Sayyid Aḥmad ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh al-Sikandarī (died 693AH/1294CE), and Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Būṣayrī (died 694AH/1295CE). Some of his wisdom is encapsulated by the following sayings,

Do not take as a companion one who prefers himself to you for he is vile. Neither take one who prefers you to himself, for he will not last long. Hold companionship with him who, when he remembers, remembers Allah, for Allah will take his place when he is absent, and bring enrichment through him when he is present.

The Sufi way is the holding of one’s course toward Allah by four things. The first of these four is *dhikr*, the basis of which is righteous works, and the fruit of which is illumination. The second is meditation, the basis of which is perseverance, and the fruit of which is knowledge. The third is *zuhd*, the basis of which is thankfulness, and the fruit of which is an increase of it. The fourth is love, the basis of which is dislike of the world and its people, and the fruit of which is union with the beloved.

Real knowledge of what is good implies dwelling in it and real knowledge of what is evil implies departure from it.

The vilest of men in rank is one who is parsimonious of worldly possessions toward one deserving them.

There are two virtues that facilitate the way to Allah; mystical knowledge and love. Your love for material things renders you blind and deaf.

My teacher admonished me saying, “Flee from the good of humans more than you flee from their evil, for their evil afflicts your body while their good afflicts your heart, and that you should be afflicted in your body is better than that you are afflicted in your heart.

Any affliction for which a hope for reward is entertained and punishment is feared is not an affliction. An affliction for which a reward is not hoped nor a punishment is feared — that only is an affliction.

I heard someone say, “He who is sensitive is not patient. He who burdens himself with trouble has not resigned his affair to Allah. He who asks is not contented with Allah. He who calls for help has not trusted. These are five things, and how great is your need to be assiduous in these five!” (source: <https://thesufiway.co.uk/friends-of-god/imam-al-shadhili/>).

Glossary

‘Abbasids – second major dynasty in Muslim history, which came directly after the Umayyads. ‘Abbasid kings ruled from 132–656AH (750–1258CE) until their capital city of Baghdad was sacked by the Mongols. The dynasty regrouped in the Mamluk capital of Cairo in 659AH (1261CE) and continued to rule over a limited area of the original empire until 923AH (1517CE), when the Ottoman Sultanate gained ascendancy. At its peak, the empire extended from Persia to what is now Algeria in North Africa and northward into Asia Minor and Anatolia. Wrongly described as a *khilāfah*, the dynasty was named after the Prophet’s (ﷺ) uncle, al-‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib.

‘adāwah – hostility, animus.

ahillaḥ – crescent moons that mark the beginning and end of the lunar months; the singular is *hilāl*.

Ahl al-Kitāb – Folks of the Book (also People of the Book); this expression refers to people who belong or belonged to any of a number

of holy books or scriptures that were revealed by Allah (ﷻ) to His Prophets (ﷺ) throughout the course of history. Most notably among them are “Jews” and “Christians” who still have an affinity with or a “working relationship” with the Bible — Old and New Testaments, respectively.

ajtahidu ‘aqlī – *I will exert my utmost mental effort.*

ākhirah – *the end-life or afterlife*; this expression refers to the hereafter, or afterlife, or life after death. In a more refined sense, this word alludes to the time-period that will follow the Day of Resurrection and Judgement.

amattanī – *You (referring to God) caused me to die*; a word that is often confused in its meaning with the word *tawaffaytanī* (*You caused me to expire*).

al-amīn – *the trustworthy, the trustee, or the fiduciary*; the commendation given to Muhammad (ﷺ) by his people before he received the commission of prophethood.

āmīn – *we consent to, approve of, and are committed to what was said.*

al-āmir – *literally, the commander; the “boss.”* In this volume, the usage of the word concerns the poet-king Imru’ al-Qays who consulted the divining arrows of the idol Dhū al-Khalaṣāḥ in Tabālah (located in the ‘Asīr area of the Arabian Peninsula) before setting out to attack Banū Asad; the arrows were called the “demander” (*al-āmir*), the “forbidder” (*al-nahy*), and the “vigilant” (*al-mutarabbiṣ*).

al-amr bi-al-ma’rūf wa-al-nahy ‘an al-munkar – *to demand and authorize what is self-evidently right and to deconstruct and decommission what is self-evidently obnoxious.*

an‘ām – *refers literally to camels, cows, and sheep.* By analogy, however, it could also be extended to include buffalos, goats, deer, and any

other hoofed and cud-chewing mammals that are from the same biological classification.

anṣāb – *idols, graven images; statues, monuments.* In the *jāhili* Arabian (pre-Islamic) tradition, these were idols set aside for the purpose of animal offerings. The singular is *nuṣb*.

Anṣār – *supporters;* in Islamic literature this word has to be understood in context. It could occur in reference to the Almighty — as in the Qur’an, *anṣār Allāh* — or it could be in reference to the Prophet (ﷺ) — as in the *Sīrah*, *anṣār rasūl Allāh*. The word *anṣārī* is the singular of *Anṣār*.

‘aqīdah – *a set of key convictions; indoctrination.* In Islamic history, responding to challenges from Christianity and Zoroastrianism, it was a largely unfinished attempt by the Mu‘tazilah and other notable Islamic scholars (working individually, that is, not within the deliberative mechanism of a *shūrā* that such a task demands) to define the core elements of the Islamic theology.

aqṭāb – *plural of qutb.*

Aṣḥāb al-Kahf – *literally, “the folks of the cave.”* They lived in an area thought to be today’s Levant (geographical Syria) under a tyrant king. After taking issue with the king’s false authority and the “state’s” false power they abandoned their subservient society and left for a cave where they could have the freedom to be Allah’s (ﷻ) servants and subjects. And as Allah’s (ﷻ) decree would have it, they were to remain over 300 years in that cave and then come back to life — in a new society and a new dispensation. *Sūrah al-Kahf*, the 18th chapter of the Qur’an, is named after this group.

Ash‘arī – Islamic theological school based on the thought of Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Ismā‘īl al-Ash‘arī (260–324AH/ 873–935CE), generally considered to be the theological foundation of “Sunni” Islam. Al-Ash‘arī started out as a Mu‘tazilī, but even though he eventually

rejected aspects of those ideas, he went on to apply the Mu'tazili use of dialectic and rational methods to the dogmas of Islam — except that whereas the Mu'tazilaḥ had used logic to bring everything down to a horizontal plane, he accepted the transcendent aspects of divinity. Al-Ash'arī is also known for the doctrine of *kasb* (literally *acquisition*) regarding human action. According to him, any act such as the mere raising of the hand, is created by Allah, but acquired by the creature who thus takes responsibility for it. This is a device to ascribe free will to man and therefore responsibility, but to reserve all power of action to Allah(ﷻ) alone. Refer to **Endnote 453** in Volume 10 for more information.

ashhadu an lā ilāha illā Allāh, wa-ashhadu anna Muḥammadan rasūl Allāh – *I testify that there is no deity/authority (worthy of conformity) except Allah, and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.*

ashrakū – (those who) attributed divinity/authority to any beside Allah (ﷻ); the active (verbal) form of the word *shirk*.

ashyā' – things; the singular is *shay'*.

aswār al-aqdār – walls of predestined decrees; from the expression, “Antecedent motivations (*sawābiq al-himam*) cannot pierce the walls of predestined decrees (*aswār al-aqdār*),” by Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh in his book, *Kitāb al-Ḥikam*.

Aws – in Yathrib, one of the two main Arabian power factions, perpetually at war with each other, before the arrival of the Prophet (ﷺ), the other one being the Khazraj.

awsaṭ – central, pivotal; in the context of some *āyāt* in *Sūrah al-An'ām*, according to some *mufasssirs*, the word alludes to the “best” food being offered to the needy in the matter of a *kaffārah* (atonement).

āyah – illustration, miracle; this could refer to Allah's (ﷻ) illustration through revelation, that is, the verse(s) of the generous Qur'an; it

can also refer to Allah's (ﷻ) illustration of power and authority in the course of prophetic and social history (that is, an alteration of physical laws: miracles); and lastly, it could refer to Allah's (ﷻ) illustration of power as an act of creation. Plural for *āyah* is *āyāt*.

azlām – *headless and featherless arrows used in divination; the singular is zalam.*

baḥīrah – *a she-camel whose ear has been obviously cleaved, whose meat and milk was unlawful for women (in jāhiliyah times), that has reproduced at least five times, and that is sequestered from being mounted for rides or loads.*

balā' – *test, trial; affliction.*

balāgh – *communication, announcement, proclamation; often used to describe the mode of communication between the Prophets (ﷺ) and their peoples and societies.*

Banū 'Abd Manāf – *one of the major branches of the Quraysh, whose founding member was 'Abd Manāf al-Mughīrah ibn Quṣayy, the great-great-grandfather of Muhammad (ﷺ).*

Banū Hāshim – *a sub-clan of Banū 'Abd Manāf, considered in Arabian jāhili times to be the rival of Banū 'Abd Shams, which gave rise to Banū Umayyah. The clan's name is attributed to Hāshim ibn 'Abd Manāf al-Mughīrah, the great-grandfather of Muhammad (ﷺ). It was Hāshim who initiated the two trade caravans from Makkah to Yemen in the winter, and from Makkah to al-Shām in the summer; and it was he who also started the practice of giving food and drink as a hospitality to the pilgrims visiting the Ka'bah. Hāshim is buried in Gaza (Palestine), the full name of which is Ghazzatu-Hāshim.*

Banū Isrā'il – *the Children of Israel.*

barakah – *blessing, boon, and benefit.*

ba‘th – resurrection; awakening, rebirth, renaissance.

bay‘ah – pledge of allegiance.

al-Bayt al-‘Atīq – the Enduring House; one of the homologous names of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām.

al-Bayt al-Ḥarām – the Sanctified (or Restricted) House; this is the Inviolable House of Allah (ﷺ) in Makkah, which is described and should be maintained as *mathābatan li-al-nāsi wa-amnā* (a place of retreat for people and a zone of security). It is also referred to as simply the Ḥaram or al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. The perimeters of this Ḥaram extend to include most of Makkah.

al-dār al-ākhirah – the abode of the afterlife; refer also to the definition of *ākhirah* above.

da‘wah – call; contemporarily used, though not necessarily right, to mean missionary activity designed to convince non-Muslims of Allah’s (ﷺ) message.

dhikr – consciousness; many times this word refers to a person’s consciousness of Allah (ﷺ). This consciousness is not achieved simply by remembering Him, but further by Him reminding us.

Dhū al-Ḥijjah – the twelfth month of the Islamic hijrī calendar; it is also one of the four months in which *al-ladhīna āmanū* are not to initiate any fighting or hostilities.

Dhū al-Qa‘dah – the eleventh month of the Islamic hijrī calendar; it is also one of the four months in which *al-ladhīna āmanū* are not to initiate any fighting or hostilities.

Dhū al-Qarnayn – literally, “he who spans (or connects) two generations (ages, eras).” Nearly one-third of *Sūrah al-Kahf*, the Qur’an’s 18th chapter, is devoted to a narrative of his leadership skills in helping

people overcome difficult obstacles — an illustration of how one's commitment to Allah (ﷻ) works in real life.

dīn – *ideological pattern and social prototype*; this word is probably one of the most mistranslated words. The usual translation of the word is *religion*. But in a better understanding of Islamic terms the word *dīn* should carry within its meaning a lively prototype and a social system. As such a *dīn* could be man-made and in denial of Allah (ﷻ) or it may be in conformity with Allah (ﷻ) and in affirmation of Him.

du‘ā’ – *prayer or a reverent petition to Allah (ﷻ)*.

du‘āt – *callers to Islam*; Islamic “missionaries.” Its singular is *dā‘ī*.

dukhān – *smoke*.

dunyā – *world*.

dunyawī – *having to do with the world*.

fa-ijtanibū – *And so, (you should) cease and desist!*

fajr – *break of the day, the first light of day*; this is when obedient Muslims offer their dawn *ṣalāh*.

faqīh – *savant, academician*; one who specializes, in particular, in matters that are jurisprudential.

farā’id – *mandatory acts that incur a sin if they are avoided or not done*. Its singular is *farīdah*.

fiqh – *practical knowledge, legal knowledge, jurisprudence*; the moral and legal understanding and interpretation of Islamic norms and laws within a particular generation or set of circumstances.

fiqh al-aqalliyāt – Islamic jurisprudence tailored for Muslims who happen to be a minority in a particular social order, and are therefore subjected to its compulsions.

fiqh al-ḍarūrāt – exigent Islamic jurisprudence, or the Islamic legal pre-scripts of necessity.

fiqhī – of or pertaining to *fiqh*.

fitan – plural of *fitnah*.

fitnah – trial and temptation, affliction; mainstream public opinion contradicting the truth and justice; seduction, sedition.

fusūq – decomposition, decay; this term usually is used in reference to human beings who initially commit themselves to Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ) but then later during the details of social struggle show an elemental or visceral tendency to quit from the tasks and demands of such a struggle as it peaks. This failure of theirs is a failure of nerve and resolve at an *instinctual* level. A person demonstrating such behavior is called a *fāsiq*.

ghayb – unseen, unknown, metaphysical, incomprehensible.

ḥadd – limit; law of punishment enforceable only by the Islamic state. The plural is *ḥudūd*.

hadith – a verbal or practical precedent of the Prophet (ﷺ); the simple linguistic meaning of the word is *speech*.

al-Hadith – the full body of hadith literature of the Prophet (ﷺ).

hady(u) – the lead animal in a pack or herd of grazing livestock.

al-Ḥajar al-Aswad – literally, *the black stone*. It refers to the renowned Black Stone embedded in the southeast corner of the Ka‘bah.

Ḥajar al-Sa‘ādah – literally, *the stone of felicity*; it is a reddish stone located at the northwest corner of the Ka‘bah.

Hajj – *the Pilgrimage*; this is the annual meeting of the Muslims in Makkah during the last three months of the lunar year: Shawwāl, Dhū al-Qa‘dah, and Dhū al-Ḥijjah. The mass assembly of people during this annual congregation is Yawm ‘Arafah, which is the 9th day of Dhū al-Ḥijjah — the day before ‘Īd al-Aḍḥá.

ḥalāl – *sanctioned, ritually fit*; this word roughly corresponds to the word *kosher* in some of its biblical usage. The word extends over ritual and legal practices.

ḥām – *a virile (potent) bull or stud that, after impregnating 10 cows, is not to be mounted for rides.*

al-ḥamdu lillāh – *thanks and praise to Allah* (ﷻ).

al-ḥanīfiyah al-samḥah – *(the dīn of) personal independence and tolerance, according to the words of the Prophet* (ﷺ).

ḥaqq – *truth, veracity, validity; right (as in civil, human, natural, and inalienable rights).*

ḥaram of Makkah – *a restricted precinct that extends in some directions up to a 12-mile (20-km) radius around the Ka‘bah.*

Ḥaram, the – *Restricted Sanctuary*; the Ḥaram in the generic sense is the Inviolable House of Allah (ﷻ) in Makkah — the Ka‘bah.

ḥarām – *taboo, unauthorized or unlawful*; the opposite of *ḥalāl*.

ḥijāb – *cover, wrap, drape; screen, partition*. In general usage, it refers to the dress code according to Islamic standards.

al-Ḥijāz – historical province of the Arabian Peninsula on the western shore of the Red Sea, the territory in which the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah are located.

Ḥijr Ismā‘īl – literally, *the sacrosanct or consecrated locale of Ismā‘īl*; this is the crescent-shaped area immediately adjacent to the northern wall of the Ka‘bah, where Prophet Ismā‘īl (ﷺ) and his mother Hājar are said to be buried.

Hijrah, the – *the forced departure of Muhammad (ﷺ) from Makkah to Madinah*; in a sense it was the Prophet (ﷺ) securing asylum from the Makkan *mushriks* and also his assumption of the role of leader, statesman, and ultimate decision maker — or imam — of the newly established Islamic State in Madinah.

hijrī – *referring to the Hijrah, or more generally to the Islamic calendar and the dates organized according to its lunar pattern of timekeeping.*

ḥudūd – *plural of ḥadd.*

ḥukm – *a ruler’s control, jurisdiction, power, dominion, command authority, and/or sovereignty over the ruled.*

Iblīs – *Lucifer*; this word is generally used as a name of Satan before he broke with God and became the evil being that would bedevil Adam, Eve (ﷺ), and their descendants.

‘iddah – *a woman’s prescribed retreat or waiting period (after divorce or husband’s death).*

iḥrām – *a state of ritual consecration.*

ijtihād – *a legal Islamic assessment or edict*; this word infers a rigorous scholarly effort to reach an informed opinion based upon the Qur’an and the Sunnah.

ilāh – deity, god, authority.

imam – leader; the word has both positive and negative usages in the Qur’anic text.

īmān – secure commitment, covenant; the word is virtually a distillation of *amānah* (trust) and *amn* (security).

Injīl – the Gospel; the original, unadulterated divine revelation to Jesus (ﷺ), which bears little resemblance to what survives today as the New Testament.

iqāmah – raising up; erection, establishment; staging. In conjunction with the *ṣalāh* — *iqāmat al-ṣalāh* — it means *standardizing* (and *socializing*) the *ṣalāh*.

irādaḥ al-‘abdi wa-kasbuhū – literally, what a conforming subject intends and thereby gains; personal cause and effect.

ishrāk – admission of someone as a participant; sometimes in the Islamic literature, this word is used synonymously with *shirk*.

Islam – resignation/yielding; this is a relationship with Allah (ﷻ) more than it is a religion. And it defines individuals and people who acquiesce and adhere to the will of Allah (ﷻ). Like other Qur’anic words, its specific meaning is refined within the context it is found in. Generally speaking, it may be understood to refer to the “civic character” or “civilian status” of people once there is a full and meaningful *taqwā-type* orderliness with associated rules.

‘iṣmah – safekeeping, custody, protection. Linguistically, before the Qur’an was revealed, the word was understood to mean *protection* (from something) or *safeguarding* (against something); in the pre-Islamic context, one of the usages of the word designated a *security pact*. However, the Qur’anic use of an active form of the word (*ya‘ṣimuka*), “...*wa-allāhu ya‘ṣimuka min al-nās*: ...and Allah safe-

guards you [O Muhammad] in contradistinction to [the rest of] humanity [which characteristically falls into sin]” (5:67), expanded the range of its meaning. Consequently, with Allah’s (ﷻ) protection from that which normally afflicts human nature (to err, to make mistakes, to sin), ‘*iṣmah*’ also took on the attendant meaning of *innocence-cum-impeccability*, without losing its original intent of safeguarding against something harmful.

isrā’iliyāt – Jewish traditions falsely (or opportunistically) attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ) that have found their way into compendiums of Islamic hadith literature.

istiwā’ – straightness, evenness, level; the word refers to Allah (ﷻ) “...settling into a position on the throne” (32:4).

itā’ al-zakāh – systematic and social allocation of *zakāh*. Refer also to *zakāh* below.

ja’ala – to render, cause to become; the development of a thing from something else, or the induction of one thing from another, or the transformation of an element into another, or even the transfer of a thing from one place to another. The verb is also used to shed light on man’s embedded effort within the will of Allah (ﷻ); it draws attention to the fact that man cannot act alone. This word has to be distinguished from the word *khalāqa* which means *to create* (see definition below).

al-jabr – algebra.

al-jabr wa-al-ikhtiyār – predestination versus free will (choice).

jāhili – pertaining to *jāhiliyāh* (ignocracy); ignocratic.

jāhiliyāh – an era of governance without God, the age of systemic lack of scriptural guidance; it may be characterized as an “ignocracy” or “idiocracy.” It not only refers to the time preceding Muhammad (ﷺ),

but also any time period in which Allah's (ﷻ) *din* is overrun by other systems and establishments.

al-Jahīm – *Hell*; this is the place where evildoers in the world will end up in the afterlife. Its main feature of torment is the fire.

jihād – *the ultimate effort and sacrifice*; it is not *holy war*. The word has a spectrum of meanings and applications that range from a struggle against the forces of evil within the self to a struggle against the forces of evil within the cosmos.

jinn – *unseen, intelligent beings*; this is an independent species of intelligent and advanced life that will be held accountable, like humans, on the Day of Judgement. Their composition is from the substance of the fire, whereas man's composition is from the substance of clay.

Jumadā al-Ākhirah – *the sixth month of the Islamic hijrī calendar*.

juz' – *volume*; the Qur'an has 30 *juz's*.

Ka'bah – *a cubic structure, an object of veneration*; the black enshrouded cube at the center of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, originally built by Ibrāhīm and Ismā'il (ﷺ) and around which Muslim pilgrims perform their *ṭawāf* (circumambulation).

kaffārah – *expiatory offering*. Some asset or value rendered to society by a person who violates certain Islamic laws. Examples are freeing a slave, fasting, feeding the poor, paying an amount of money where it is needed most, etc.

kaffārāt – *plural of kaffārah*.

kāfir – *one who actively resists and refuses to comply with Allah (ﷻ)*; every person who enlists in *kufr* becomes a *kāfir*. Plurals are *kāfirūn*, *kāfirīn*, and *kuffār*; refer to the general definition of *kufr* below.

khalāqa – to create; the initiation of something from nothing. It represents the will of Allah (ﷻ) for something to exist without the participation of humans or any other being(s). Creation, or to create, is specific to Allah (ﷻ) — only Allah (ﷻ) can create.

khalīfah – successor; this word has its Qur’anic context. In this context man/humans are designated as Allah’s (ﷻ) successors on earth. In post-prophetic Islamic literature it refers to those who succeeded the Prophet (ﷺ) as the leader of the Muslims.

khamr – literally, fermented and/or distilled intoxicants; any intoxicant or hallucinogen including drugs such as cocaine and marijuana.

khayra ummatin ukhrijat li-al-nās – the best ummah (interactively) advanced/evolved for people.

Khazraj – the other of the two main Arabian power factions in Yathrib, at war with the Aws, before the arrival of the Prophet (ﷺ).

khilāfah – successorship; Caliphate.

al-Khilāfah al-Rāshidah – Rightly-Guided Caliphate; this is typically identified by Sunnī historians as the short period of legitimate representative Islamic rule following the death of the Prophet (ﷺ) and preceding the first age of repressive, autocratic, and hereditary kings, started by the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, Mu’āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān. Lasting 30 years, it comprised the administrations, in order, of Abū Bakr (10–12AH), ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (12–22AH), ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (22–34AH), ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (34–39AH), and al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī, the Prophet’s (ﷺ) grandson (40AH) who ruled for six months.

kiswah – clothing, apparel, garment; draping, lining. This is the cover or cladding of the Ka’bah, nowadays a brocaded black cloth with woven black calligraphic patterns, and a band of Qur’anic calligraphy embroidered in gold thread around the top portion.

kitāb – *the divine Writ*; this word, in the context of the Qur’an, refers to the specific Qur’an itself while in other places it refers to generic scripture. The context in which it is used “fine-tunes” its meaning.

kufr – *denial of Allah’s (ﷻ) authority and power*; this becomes a “philosophy” or an “ideology.” There is a mental construct of ideas that argue against Allah (ﷻ) as Sovereign, Lawgiver, and Authority. There may be many expressions of this antithetical hypothesis and political orientation; but one thing in common among all of them — bar none — is their exclusion of Allah (ﷻ) as the Almighty and the ultimate Authority.

kullu amr – *all decrees.*

lā ilāha illā Allāh – *there is no deity/authority (worthy of conformity) except Allah (ﷻ).*

al-ladhīna āmanū – *those who are securely committed to Allah (ﷻ); the first among equals in an Islamic society.*

lām – *the 23rd letter of the Arabic alphabet (corresponds roughly to the English letter “L”).*

al-Lāt – *the goddess*; one of the three goddesses venerated by the *jāhili* Arabians. According to al-Kalbī, from his *Kitāb al-Aṣṅām (the Book of Idols)*, the Quraysh and other pre-Islamic Arabians believed al-Lāt resided in the Ka‘bah and also had an idol inside the sanctuary; however, a clan of the Thaḳīf (in al-Ṭā‘if) were the custodians of her shrine. These *jāhili* Arabians considered her to be one of the daughters of God, an offspring of His marriage to a jinn.

latajidanna – *you (second person plural) will most assuredly find...*

al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz – *the guarded tablet.*

madhhab – an (Islamic) rational pursuit in fulfilling the meanings of the Qur’an and Sunnah; usually refers to one of the Islamic *fiqhī* schools of thought.

Madinan – having to do with Madinah; usually refers to Qur’anic verses (*āyāt*) revealed in Madinah.

maḥabbah – love.

mā’idah – tablespread, banquet.

maktūb – (it is) written; foreordained.

Mālik al-Mulk – the Possessor of everything and all; one of the attributes of Allah (ﷻ).

Manāh – the goddess of fate; the second of the three goddesses venerated by the *jāhili* Arabians. She was considered the wife of Hubal. Al-Kalbī in his *Kitāb al-Aṣnām* (the Book of Idols) describes her as the most ancient of all the Arabian idols, and that her likeness (idol) was erected on the seashore in the vicinity of al-Mushallal in Qudayd, between Madinah and Makkah. The Aws and the Khazraj, as well as the inhabitants of Madinah and Makkah and their vicinities, used to hold Manāh sacred, sacrifice before her, and bring to her their offerings. Like al-Lāt, Manāh was also considered by the pre-Islamic Arabians to be one of the daughters of God.

Maqām Ibrāhīm – the station or rank of Prophet Abraham; the expression, which is cited in two *āyāt* of the Qur’an (2:125, 3:97), could refer to all of the area covered by al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, or indeed all of Makkah, or it could refer to the status of Ibrahim as the one who built the first place on earth exclusively for the devotion of Allah (ﷻ) and who took an independent course away from the forces inimical to His will. In the geography of today’s Ka’bah, it refers to the stepping stone used by Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) during the construction of the orig-

inal Ka‘baḥ; the stone, carrying an impression of his footprints, is housed in a glass enclosure on the north side of the Ka‘baḥ.

marḥūmūn – *those who receive Allah’s (ﷻ) mercy; plural of marḥūm.*

al-Marwaḥ – a hillock in Makkah opposite the hillock al-Ṣafā, in the vicinity of the Well of Zamzam. During the Hajj and ‘Umraḥ, Muslims perform the ritual running (*sa’y*) between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwaḥ to commemorate Hājar’s frantic running back and forth seven times between these two hills to look for water and sustenance for her infant son Ismā‘il (ﷺ) whose life was threatened because of thirst and hunger.

masjid – *the place or area of sujūd (prostration); a mosque.*

al-Masjid al-Ḥarām – *the Restricted Sanctuary; see also the Ḥaram and al-Bayt al-Ḥarām.*

maskh – *transformation, metamorphosis, transmutation.* In the context of the Yahūd, it refers to the expedited worldly penalty of genetic regression that resulted in some of them “lapsing” into a sub-human, animal-like species.

ma‘ṣūm – *refers to someone who or something that is safeguarded, for instance, one who is innocent-cum-impeccable (such as a prophet).* Refer to the definition of ‘iṣmaḥ above.

maṭāf – *the area around the Ka‘baḥ where the ṭawāf (circumambulation) takes place.*

mathābatan li-al-nāsi wa-amnā – *a place of retreat for people and a zone of security; the expression refers to Makkah.*

mathānī – *next, second; refers to the sūraḥs that have less than 100 āyāt, but not inclusive of the very short sūraḥs at the end of the*

Qur'an. It could also refer to *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*, as it is recited multiple times during the daily *ṣalāḥs*.

mawaddah – affection, warmheartedness.

minbar – pulpit or podium; most of the time, this word refers to the platform from which the Jumu'ah sermon is delivered in the *masjid* each week. In a more general sense, it is just a raised platform to give prominence to the person on it.

minhāj – program, plan of action.

mi'ūn – hundreds; refers to the *sūrah*s that have roughly 100 *āyāt*, but not inclusive of the very long *sūrah*s at the beginning of the Qur'an. Some categorizations suggest that it consists of the range from *Sūrah Yūnus* to *al-'Ankabūt*.

mizāb – rainspout.

mizān – a measuring scale, a balance.

mu'adhḥin – a person who calls (announces) the *adhān*.

mufāṣalah – differentiation, distinctiveness.

mufaṣṣal – sectioned, presented in logical order; refers to the *sūrah*s at the end of the Qur'an that have relatively few or very short *āyāt*.

mufassir – exegetist; one who explains the meanings of the Qur'an.

Muhājirūn – people forced out of their homelands; in particular, these are people who are forced out because of their scriptural convictions, strenuous efforts, and energetic attempts at socializing scripture. Generally in Islamic literature, this term refers to the Prophet's (ﷺ) companions who made the Hijrah from Makkah to Madinah. The word *muhājir* is singular for *Muhājirūn*.

al-Muḥarram – *the first month of the Islamic hijrī calendar; it is also one of the four months in which al-ladhīna āmanū are not to initiate any fighting or hostilities.*

mujtahid – *one who issues or is capable of issuing a legal Islamic assessment or edict; refer to the definition of ijtihād above.*

mulk – *that which is temporarily owned (and used) by man but ultimately and finally owned by Allah (ﷻ). This word must be understood in light of its relationship to the words milk and malakūt. Milk refers to the ordinary possessions of man such as a house, car, furniture, etc; at the other end of the spectrum is malakūt — what can only be owned by Allah (ﷻ), such as the heavens and earth. In the middle lies mulk, referring, for instance, to such things as power, knowledge, and “resources.”*

multazam – *coherence; refers to the space between the Black Stone and the door leading inside the Ka‘bah.*

mu’min – *every person who is firmly and securely committed to Allah (ﷻ); a bearer of imān. See imān above.*

munāfiq – *a dual loyalist; those “Muslims” who are outwardly performing their part in a ritual Islam, but when it comes time to honor this Islam in its struggle and sacrifices, they show inclination toward the anti-Islamic camps, states, or powers around. They feign Islam, while in reality they owe their allegiance to the representatives of kufr. See nifāq below.*

munkar – *that which is self-evidently objectionable and offensive.*

mushrik – *an individual(s) and people(s) who actively and institutionally diminish the authority of Allah (ﷻ) and promote the authority of others. They equate worldly powers with Allah (ﷻ) and they denigrate Allah (ﷻ) as “one among many” deities and authorities. The feminine singular is mushrikah; feminine plural is mushrikāt.*

Muslim – a man or woman who has acquiesced to the command and counsel of Allah (ﷻ), and the leadership of the final prophet, Muhammad (ﷺ); plural is *muslimūn*.

al-mutarabbiṣ – the vigilant; refer to the definition of *al-āmir* above.

Mu‘tazilah – from the Arabic word *‘tazala*, meaning to remove oneself from, to bow out; a school of thought that was born out of, or inserted itself into, the controversies of the civil strife between Imam ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib on the one hand and the Prophet’s (ﷺ) companions, al-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām and Ṭalḥaḥ ibn ‘Ubaydillāh, and the absolutist, binary, and condemnatory views of the Khawārij (Kharijites) on the other hand. Faced with a conflict between opposing parties, none of whom could reasonably be considered absolutely reprehensible, the need arose for dogmatic nuances. Considered to be the progenitor of the rationalist movement in Islamic thought, the theological school was founded by Wāṣil ibn ‘Aṭā’ (81–130AH/700–748CE). Refer to **Endnote 453** in Volume 10 for more information.

muttaqī – one who is actively conscious of Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence and hence is always on the alert and on the defensive pertaining to Allah (ﷻ); this word should never be translated as *pious* or *fearful*, as it is known nowadays.

muṭṭawi‘ūn – volunteers; enforcers. The singular is *muṭṭawi‘*.

al-nahy – the forbidders; refer to the definition of *al-āmir* above.

najāsaḥ – impurity, filth; opposite of *ṭahāraḥ*.

nāqaḥ – she-camel.

Naṣārā – theological Christians or political Christians (defined by context).

Naṣrānī – a theological or ideological Christian (defined by context).

nifāq – disloyalty, hypocrisy, feigning allegiance.

nikāḥ – ceremonial and contractual marriage; matrimony, wedlock.

nikāḥ al-istibdāʿ – swap marriage; an arrangement in jāhili Arabia in which a woman would sleep with a man of status (other than her husband) so that their offspring would belong to a higher class.

nikāḥ al-mutʿah – sexual gratification marriage; allowed temporarily, but later banned, by the Prophet (ﷺ), in instances when the Muslims were on long sojourns away from home, so as to prevent them from self-mutilation. In such circumstances, they were permitted to climax with willing clothed women, but not go all the way to intercourse.

nūn al-tawkīd – the 25th letter of the Arabic alphabet (corresponds roughly to the English letter “N”) when it is used as a lexical emphazier.

nūr – light, luminance.

nushūr – resurrection.

qadar – power, proportion, will; capacity, destiny. It could have the opposite meaning depending on context, hence it could mean the independent will to act, as with the *qadar* of Allah (ﷻ), or the way man’s destiny is shaped by the interplay between his will and the divine will, “**But you cannot will it unless Allah, the Sustainer of all the worlds, wills [to show you that way]**” (81:29).

al-qadar wa-al-qadāʾ – will versus fate.

qadariyah – advocates of man’s independent free will.

qalāʾid – the animals in a herd or flock of grazing livestock that follow the lead animal, hady(u).

qarasha – to gnash, grind (teeth).

qarn – horn (of an animal), antenna; age, era, century; generation (people who belong to the same time frame or socio-economic class).

qarsh – shark.

qawāmah – the initiative or actuation position.

qiblah – the accommodating and unifying center that attracts the Muslims in their time of *ṣalāh* and devotional services. The Muslims' *qiblah* is Makkah.

qismaḥ – part, portion, lot; fate.

qitāl – fighting, warring, combat.

qiyām(an) – rising, standing; launch pad, kick off, breakout; the portion of a Muslim's *ṣalāh* that is performed while he is standing.

qiyās – comparison, correspondence, analogy, or deduction; in *fiqhī* methodology, this is considered to be one of the sources of Islamic (interpretive) legislation, and is relied upon if the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the consensus of the *Ṣaḥābah* are not explicit on a particular issue. It is applied to a situation where a known injunction from the first three sources "corresponds" to a new situation for which clear guidance from the initial three sources is not immediately obvious. The Hanbali, the *Zāhirī*, the *Ja'farī*, and the (extant) *Ismā'īlī* Schools of Islamic Law have rejected *qiyās* as a source of legislation; however the *Mu'tazilah* accepted and utilized it.

al-Quds – the Consecrated City; this, obviously, is the name of Jerusalem in the Arabic language.

Quraysh – literally, little shark; refer to **Endnote 250** in this volume and **Endnote 257** in Volume 7 for a brief history of the dominant power constituent of Makkah.

Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ – *Quraysh of the Hollow*; in today’s vernacular, this would be something akin to “urban” Quraysh.

Quraysh al-Zawāhir – *Quraysh of the Outskirts*; today, this would be analogous to “rural” or “suburban” Quraysh.

Qurayshī – *having to do with the Quraysh.*

quṭb – *what draws together at one point, what concentrates; a pole or axis.* In the Sufi tradition, one who is considered to be a preeminent transformative figure, a “spiritual pole.” Its plural is *aqṭāb*.

rahmah – *mercy, grace.*

Rajab – *the seventh month of the Islamic hijrī calendar*; the month in which the ancient Arabians used to perform the ‘Umrah, and hence it is one of *al-ashhur al-ḥurum*. This month was frequently shifted in pre-Islamic times.

Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ) – *the Messenger of Allah* (ﷺ); also called *Allah’s Apostle*, *Allah’s Messenger*, or simply *the Prophet*. When this is used in Islamic literature, the majority of times it is in reference to the final messenger, Muhammad (ﷺ).

rawshan – *skylight, hatchway*; a style of architecture in the Ḥijāz in which houses had projecting wooden balconies where one could sleep at night, or sit and enjoy the evening breeze.

ra’y – *opinion*; in Islamic *fiqhī* discourse, this is a *shar‘ī* view based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah.

ribā – *usury*; a particular type of nefarious and vicious financial transaction that generates money from lending money.

rijs – *filth, dirty act.*

risālah – written communication, letter, or message; scriptural substance delivered to humanity/community by a prophet from Allah (ﷺ).

rubūbiyah – Allah's (ﷻ) sustaining authority.

rūh – vital essence, soulfulness.

Rūh al-Qudus – the archangel Gabriel (ﷺ).

al-Ṣābi'ah – Sabaeans; refer to **Endnote 766** in this volume.

ṣadaqaḥ – charity; the act of giving money or wealth without expecting to be financially compensated for it. Its plural is *ṣadaqāt*.

al-Ṣafā – a hillock in Makkah opposite the hillock al-Marwaḥ, in the vicinity of the Well of Zamzam. See al-Marwaḥ above.

Ṣaḥābah – the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ).

ṣaḥīḥ – sound, authentic, credible; in hadith literature, this refers to (unquestionably) valid hadiths.

Ṣaḥīḥ(s) of various scholars – the compilation of hadiths collected by *al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah, al-Nisā'ī, al-Tirmidhī, and others.*

sā'ibah – a vagrant camel, dedicated (or assigned) to the idols, never to be worked, its hair not to be trimmed, and its milk only to be given to guests.

sakar – inebriant.

ṣalāḥ – expressing a concentrated and devotional relationship with Allah (ﷻ); Muslims should do this (at least) five times a day: *Fajr, Zuhr, 'Aṣr, Maghrib, and 'Ishā'.*

ṣāliḥūn – those who sincerely do good works for the cause of Allah (ﷻ), expecting no earthly gratification or reward; plural of ṣāliḥ.

samāʿ – harmonics.

sawābiq al-himam – antecedent motivations; from the expression, “Antecedent motivations (*sawābiq al-himam*) cannot pierce the walls of predestined decrees (*aswār al-aqdār*),” by Ibn ‘Aṭā’illāh in his book, *Kitāb al-Ḥikam*.

saʿy – running, moving quickly; the ceremony, during the Hajj or ‘Umrah, of running seven times between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah.

shadrawān – foundation at the base of the Ka’bah.

shafāʿah – intercession, advocacy.

shahādah – testimonial; like other words, the variation in meaning depends on the context the word is used in. This word refers mostly to two concepts in Islamic literature. The first is the article of faith: *Ashhadu an lā ilāha illā Allāh, wa-ashhadu anna Muḥammadan rasūlu Allāh*, which means “I bear witness (testify) that there is no deity/authority (worthy of conformity) except Allah, and I bear witness (testify) that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” The second concept related to the word *shahādah* is martyrdom.

shahīd – martyr. The plural is *shuhadāʾ*.

sharʿī – of or pertaining to the Shari’ah. When this refers to the definition of certain words, it alludes to a specific meaning derived from the Shari’ah; for instance, the word *ṣalāh* literally means *blessing*, but its *sharʿī* meaning refers to the physical and mental communion with Allah (ﷻ) that Muslims are required to perform five times a day.

sharīʿah – legal course; more technically, the codes, procedures, and laws that take society in the direction of prosperity and survival. The word

originally meant — before the Qur'an was revealed — to take a path to a body of fresh water; now it generally refers to the body of Islamic law.

Shari'ah, the – *the Islamic legal system.*

Shawwāl – *the tenth month of the Islamic hijrī calendar; the month in which the Battle of Uḥud took place.*

Shī'ī – *literally, a follower; the intimate group around the Prophet (ﷺ) inclusive of his family and his bloodline descendants. This was a term coined by Mu'āwiyah to single out and sideline the supporters of Imam 'Alī as a cult of personality that had separated and deviated from the rest of the Ummah.*

shirk – *the act and implementation of equating or associating others with Allah (ﷻ) as divine and as authority; in other words the displacement of allegiance in man's heart and the dislocation of authority in man's life. See also mushrik above.*

shuhadā' – *plural of shahīd.*

shūrā – *a consultative assembly convened for the purpose of participatory decision-making.*

shurakā' – *sharers, co-partners, associates; those who are engaged in shirk (see definition above). Its singular is sharik.*

ṣiddīqūn – *those who remain true to their commitment to Allah (ﷻ) despite obvious challenges to the contrary; plural of ṣiddīq.*

silsilah – *something that is linked or interlocked; chain. In Sufism, this refers to the generational chain of transmission from spiritual guide to student, who himself becomes a spiritual guide and transmits to a student, and so on.*

Sīrah – *biography of the Prophet* (ﷺ); this is an account of his lifetime, particularly its struggle aspect during his years of prophethood in Makkah and Madinah.

Sufi – *mystic*.

sulṭān – *sovereign (temporal) power, dominion on earth, jurisdiction, overriding influence; ruling chief executive*. Refer also to the definitions of *mulk*, *ḥukm*, and *walāyah*.

sunan – *social laws*. This is the word's Qur'anic meaning in so far as such laws are the pattern of history, human activities, and nature. *Sunan* also refers to a compilation of hadith collected and organized by a *muḥaddith*, one who searches hadith literature with a view to organizing and verifying hadiths of the Prophet (ﷺ). It is the plural of *sunnah*.

Sunnah, the – *the lifestyle pattern of the Prophet*; or the final set of social laws imparted by Allah (ﷻ) to humanity through the agency of Muhammad (ﷺ).

Sunnī – *literally, one who adheres to the Sunnah*; the core group around the Prophet (ﷺ) inclusive of his companions and their non-errant descendants. This is an abbreviated form of a term invented by Mu'āwiyah — *ahl al-sunnah wa-al-jamā'ah* — to give legitimacy to his usurpation and takeover by force of the highest office in the Islamic State.

sūrah – *ensemble of a body of themes in the Qur'an*; there are 114 *sūrahs* in the glorious Qur'an.

ta'āzīr – *plural of ta'zīr*.

tafsīr – *exegesis; simple interpretation or critical interpretation of the meanings of the Qur'an*.

ṭāghūt – concentration and abuse of excessive power; this word is usually used to describe governments and regimes that, having accumulated wealth and resources, find themselves in a “superpower” or “hyper-power” position in the world. The exercise of this kind of centralized power makes these governments rivals (in their own consciousness) to the power and authority of Allah (ﷻ). This aggregation and engrossment of power becomes satanic.

ṭahārah – purification, hygiene.

ṭahrīru raqabah – literally, the liberation of a neck; to free (or ransom) a slave or prisoner of war.

ṭaqlīd – imitation, tradition, custom; the practice of less-knowledgeable Muslims accepting the scholarly opinions and legal decisions of most-knowledgeable Muslims — the *faqīhs* and imams.

ṭaqwá – the feeling and thinking of Allah’s (ﷻ) immediate power presence in the affairs of man that makes a person avoid Allah’s (ﷻ) corrective interference in man’s individual and social life.

ṭarīqah – way, method, procedure, system; creed. It refers, usually within the Sufi domain, to an Islamic training program that is endorsed or founded by an Islamic scholar or mystic.

ṭaṣawwuf – mysticism; Sufism.

ṭawāf – circumambulation (of the Ka’bah).

ṭawaffaytanī – You (referring to God) caused me to expire; the expression used by Jesus (ﷺ) when he is exonerating himself from the fabrications of his followers, “**And I bore witness to what they did as long as I dwelt in their midst; but since You have caused me to expire [from that time and place]...**” (5:117).

tawhīd – *monotheism, singular divine authority*; this combines in its connotational and denotational meanings all the consolidated and indivisible traits and understandings of Allah (ﷻ). In *His* self, *He* is one; in *His* attributes, *He* is one; therefore, in any way the human mind tries to understand *Him*, *He* remains exalted — as *He* distinguishes *Himself* in *His* own words.

tayyibāt – *good and wholesome things of life*.

ta'zīr – *censure, blame, rebuke, reprimand; chastisement, punishment*. In the *shar'ī* sense, this is a penalty that is not as serious as that associated with the *ḥadd* strictures. Its plural is *ta'āzīr*.

'ubūdiyyah – *the human status of conforming to and obeying Allah (ﷻ)*.

ūlā – *first; earlier, former*. The usage of the word in this volume alludes to worldly life as opposed to eternal or final life (*ākhirah*).

uli al-amr – *those who are entrusted to make decisions and issue commands with the consent of their constituencies*.

ulūhīyah – *divinity, Godliness*.

Umayyads – first dynasty in Muslim history, which usurped power after 30 years of al-Khilāfah al-Rāshidah. Inaugurated by Mu'āwīyah ibn Abī Sufyān who initiated the pattern of hereditary rule over the Muslim Ummah, the dynasty's despots ruled from 41–132AH (661–750CE) until they were overthrown by resistance movements consisting of the Khawārij and Imam 'Alī's descendents. Unfortunately, the progenitors of what would become the 'Abbasid dynasty were waiting in the wings to fill the political vacuum created by the fall of the Umayyads. The 'Abbasids moved the capital from Damascus to al-Kūfah and then to Baghdad.

Umm al-Qurá – *literally, the mother of all societies; the original social order*. It is a descriptive name of Makkah.

ummaḥ – *the consolidation of a collective will.*

Ummah, the Islamic – (*uppercase reference is always to*) *the Islamic ummaḥ of Muhammad* (ﷺ).

‘Umrah – *the lesser Hajj*; attending the Sacred Sanctuary in Makkah in a state of *iḥrām*, circling the Ka‘baḥ, and jogging between al-Ṣafa and al-Marwaḥ (no standing at ‘Arafāt is required).

al-‘Uzzá – *the mighty goddess*; the third of the three goddesses venerated by the *jāhili* Arabians. She, like Hubal, was called upon for protection by the pre-Islamic Quraysh, who cried out at the beginning of the Battle of Uḥud, “O people of al-Uzzá, people of Hubal!” According to al-Kalbī, al-Uzzá was the greatest idol among the Quraysh and they used to journey to her, offer her gifts, and seek her favors through (animal) sacrifices. Each of the three goddesses — al-Lāt, Manāḥ, and al-‘Uzzá — had a separate shrine near Makkah; the most prominent Arabian shrine of al-‘Uzzá was at a place called Nakhlaḥ near Qudayd, east of Makkah toward al-Ṭā‘if.

Wahhābī – *follower or intimate of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb* (1703–1792). Today, Wahhābīs and Wahhābism are characterized by a reductionist view of *tawḥīd*, a parochialization of *takfīr*, a rejection of all Islamic schools of thought, and an unseemly relationship with the insolent kings and monarchs of Arabia as the key executive instruments for the forced acquiescence to their misguided notions about Islam. This orientation, attended by billions of dollars of Saudi petro-wealth and chaperoned by the intelligence agencies of imperialism and Zionism, has led to the formation of non-state, paramilitary units (al-Qaeda, ISIS, the Taliban) who have demonstrated an indifferent attitude toward human life in general, and Muslim life in particular; a visceral antipathy for all Shī‘īs; and a self-righteous, messianic attitude that cannot be reasoned with or mitigated.

wahy – *revelation; inspiration.*

walā' – *fidelity, fealty, allegiance; devotion, loyalty.*

walāyah – the meaning of the word depends on the context. The Qur'anic usage of the word means *obeisance, reverence, and deference to Allah* (ﷻ). Historically, however, the word is interpreted to mean devotion to Imam 'Alī's family and hatred by some of their adversaries (this definition specifically pertains to the context of the 'Alawīs).

walī – *helper, ally, supporter, benefactor, sponsor; guardian, patron; plural is awliyā'.*

waṣīlah – *she-camel or ewe set free after seven (or ten) consecutive parturitions (birthing cycles).*

wuḍū' – *ablution consisting of washing with water the hands, mouth, nose, arms, and face as well as wiping the hair and wiping or washing the feet.*

yaraw – *they see; refer also to the definition of qarn above.*

Yathrib – the (pre-Islamic) name of the city of Madinah before the Prophet (ﷺ) arrived there.

Yawm al-Fath – the day of the liberation of Makkah by the Prophet (ﷺ): Ramaḍān 20, 8AH.

Yawm al-Qiyāmah – *Day of Resurrection.*

zāhid – *desireless.*

zakāh – *freely paying money as an act of financial maturity; usually the word is translated as almsgiving or charity, which not at all renders correctly its original meaning. Many times in the divine Writ the word zakāh is preceded by aqāma, itā, yuqīmūna... , which means that this giving of money has to be institutionalized or regulated.*

zawāj al-mut‘ah – sexual gratification marriage; refer to the explanation of *nikāḥ al-mut‘ah* above.

zīnatullāh – Allah’s (ﷻ) enhancement/adornment.

zuhd – renunciation of pleasure in worldly things, abstinence; asceticism.

zulm – injustice/oppression; this is the practical result, in human societies, of deleting Allah (ﷻ) as the only Authority and only Power in life. Many times in the divine Writ Allah (ﷻ) refers to *shirk* as being a massive expression of *zulm*. For those who are confused about who the *mushriks* are, they only need to look at parts of the world where there is colossal injustice and identify the operators of that injustice.

zulumāt – darkness, obscurity, ambiguity, vagueness; the word’s singular is *zulmah*.

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